SEA KINGS OF BRITAIN

KEPPEL TO NELSON

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SEA KINGS OF BRITAIN

KEPPEL TO NELSON

BY

G. A. R. CALLENDER, B.A.

ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE, OSBORNE

SUPPLIED FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICES

WITH MAPS AND PLANS

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PREFACE

THIS volume is the last number of a series. It will be found to contain lives of the men who fought for Britain on the sea from Quiberon to Trafalgar. This period is the classic age of the British Navy, the age of Keppel and Howe, Rodney and Hood, St. Vincent and Kempenfelt. It is a period too that exactly coincides with the span of Nelson's active life. He passed his Lieutenant's examination as Keppel made ready the *Victory* to open the war with France. He commanded his first ship in West Indian seas during the days of Admiral Rodney. He grounded his mighty schemes on the reforms of Howe and Kempenfelt: and he served in turn under Hood and Jervis, who followed his hearse to St. Paul's.

The best thanks of the author are due to Mr. George Cookson, of the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, who read the book in MS., and offered many helpful suggestions, and to Mr. F. D. Purser, of the Royal Naval College, Osborne, for assistance in revising proofs.

G. A. R. C.

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England, queen of the waves, whose green inviolate girdle enrings
thee round,
Mother fair as the morning, where is now the place of thy foemen
found ?
Still the sea that salutes us free proclaims them stricken, acclaims
thee crowned.

* * * *

England, none that is born thy son, and lives by grace of thy
glory, free,
Lives and yearns not at heart and burns with hope to serve as he
worships thee.

SWINBURNE.

SEA KINGS OF BRITAIN

KEPPEL

BORN 1725—DIED 1786

HAWKE left behind him three disciples,—Keppel, Rodney and Howe. Of these Keppel was the earliest to win recognition. He was born in 1725 and christened Augustus. He was the second son of the second Earl of Albemarle. He was educated for a time at Westminster, but entered the Navy at the early age of ten. Five years later he was lucky enough to find himself with Anson sailing in the *Centurion* to raid the Southern Seas. He was a great favourite on board. His pluck, his merry laugh, his rosy round face, his tact and ingratiating manner made every one his friend. In the battle with the *Cavadonga* his cool judgment attracted the attention of the Commodore; and he was promoted to be lieutenant before he was out of his teens. Returning to England he served with Boscawen in the *Dreadnought*, and before the end of the war of the Austrian Succession commanded a ship of his own.

In 1749, the year following the peace, he received a delicate commission. Though but twenty-four, he was given a small fleet with orders to convey an expression of British indignation to his piratical majesty, the Dey of Algiers. Keppel hoisted a pendant in the old *Centurion* and dropped down Channel. At Plymouth he made the acquaintance of a young artist who was destined to become one of his closest friends. In those days Joshua Reynolds was unknown; but he gratefully accepted Keppel's offer to study art in the Mediterranean, and returned to astonish London by his earliest portrait,—a breezy likeness of his youthful patron.

When Keppel arrived at Algiers, the Dey expressed his surprise at the uncalled-for insolence of the King of England in sending a beardless boy to hold conference with him. "Had my master," retorted the ambassador, "supposed that wisdom was measured by the length of the beard, he would have sent your deyship a he-goat!" The Grand Seignior Mohammed Khan, of the blood of Ali Osman, King of the Earth and Sea, was not inclined to suffer this from an infidel. He ordered his slaves to approach with the bowstring. But Keppel drew him to the window and pointed to the squadron lying in the bay; and the descendant of Ali Osman suddenly remembered the respect due to the sacred body of an envoy.

At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War Keppel received through the kind offices of Anson the command of the *Torbay*, a seventy-four; and came near to forming part of Byng's ill-starred expedition to Minorca. In 1757 he accompanied Hawke to Rochefort, and in 1758 was with him once more when he winged his way back to the Basque Roads and scattered the reinforcements designed for Louisburg. There was a handful of ships too in the Gironde. Keppel was left to watch them. They slipped past him. He hastened in pursuit and sighted the most formidable. As he overhauled her the Frenchman opened fire. Keppel was wounded in the leg and fell to the deck. They raised him and would have borne him below. But he stopped them. "Easy, my lads," he said. "Reach a chair. As I can't stand, I must sit. This may spoil my dancing, but it doesn't blunt my appetite for fighting." He bound his wound with a handkerchief, pressed on and took the foe.

Throughout 1759 the *Torbay* worked hard in the blockade of Brest, and on 20th November took a glorious part in the great victory among the rocks of Quiberon. The destruction of the *Thésée* brought Keppel prominently before the public eye. The King conferred on him a colonelcy of Marines. In service circles he was already regarded as the likeliest man in the Navy.

Pitt was determined to follow up without delay his victory at Quiberon. Now that he was lord of the sea he resolved to take a portion of the French coast to hold in pledge for the redemption of Minorca. Because it was well situated for operations in the Bay of Biscay, he fixed upon Belleisle. He was always kindly

disposed towards promising young men, and in the spring of 1761 he dispatched Keppel, absurdly happy, on one of the most difficult affairs of the war.

Belleisle was known to be strongly garrisoned and stoutly armed. Its forts were designed by Vauban. But more than this. The whole island was itself a single fortification, a chip of Brittany, a strong tower standing in the sea. Keppel was given twenty-eight of the line, a giant force for a youthful commodore: but then he was not to starve the place into surrender. He was to storm it: in other words to land an army on the top of precipitous cliffs in the face of a highly disciplined force. On paper the scheme was impossible. This was the deliberate verdict of many notable officers. Unconsciously they were advertising Keppel; for, although at first repulsed, he laughingly refused to acknowledge defeat: and in June Belleisle was taken.*

It is said that no one offered more strenuous opposition to the whole project than His Majesty George II, and that the vehemence of his debate with Mr. Pitt upon the subject went far to hasten his end. His death in October, 1760, changed everything. His grandson and successor, George III, was minded to rule in person without a Minister. He desired to bring the war to a close and get rid of Mr. Pitt. Neither could be done at once: but a crisis arose during Keppel's absence. Pitt suddenly announced his intention of making war on Spain. Asked his reason, he said that Spain was secretly hostile and that he desired to be first in the field. George III declined to believe that Spain could be mad enough to meditate war after witnessing the humiliation of France. There was a stormy scene in the Cabinet, and when Keppel returned with his laurels in January, 1762, he found no patron to welcome him. Mr. Pitt's Administration was ended.

In the selfsame month Spain declared war, induced thereto by the angling of France who had baited the hook with Minorca.†

There is reason to believe that the young King's advisers, of whom his tutor, Lord Bute, was chief, used Pitt's own plans in dealing with the new situation. Certainly none could have been bolder. It was resolved to take Havana, the pride of the Indies.

* Since 1761 the name *Belleisle* has frequently been chosen for a battleship.

† The farsighted Pitt had anticipated this bargain. Hence his haste to take Belleisle.

Even Drake in his pride had left it alone. An army of 12,000 were collected, veterans that had climbed with Wolfe the heights of Abraham. Lord Albemarle, Keppel's brother, commanded them. A hundred vessels were needed for their convoy, and a fleet of nineteen battleships. Hawke was still required in the Channel. Boscawen was dead. The naval command was therefore entrusted to Sir George Pocock who, in the recent capture of Pondicherry, had played a notable part comparable to that of Saunders at Quebec. As a reward for his services at Belleisle, Keppel was given the second place and hoisted his broad pendant in the *Valiant*.

The route to Havana for sailing ships was circuitous, by Jamaica and Yucatan Strait. But Anson, still at the Admiralty, had a chart of the Bahama Channel taken years before in a prize. This he now entrusted to Pocock, who successfully passed through the mazes of a channel never before navigated, and in the summer of 1762 brought the astonished Spaniards the first news of his own approach.

Havana is a magnificent fiord harbour, deep and commodious. It is approached by a narrow gullet entrance, with the town to the west of it. For defence the Spaniards had an army and navy sufficient for their purpose. But they would not fight the English at sea, and sinking three of their ships in the gullet, withdrew the remainder out of harm's way. Not without cause they placed chief reliance on the Moro Castle which lay at the harbour mouth on the opposite side to the town.

Reserving for himself a general supervision Pocock delegated to his second the work of co-operating with the soldiers against the Moro. Here was fresh chance of distinction and Keppel made the most of it. He landed the army as he had done at Belleisle in the face of opposition. He fed them. He brought them water. He put their guns ashore. More than that for a time he could not do. For their part the soldiers worked hard, but they could make no headway. The Moro was perched at the summit of a cliff whose rocky gradient made a perfect glacis. It was impossible to approach without cover. It was impossible to dig trenches in the flinty surface. The horrible climate and the midsummer sun made hard labour impossible. The men grew dispirited, growling that the Moro was impregnable. It certainly had always been reckoned so.

But the sailor, adapting himself to his surroundings and trained to find expedients among the unlikeliest material, stepped in and saved the situation. He found that the locality provided abundance of cotton and negroes. He procured both: and with black labour constructed breastworks and covered-ways out of the cotton-bales. The Moro was now approached in form and a naval brigade from the *Valiant* was the first to storm the breach.

So Havana fell. It yielded to the conquerors the fairest haven in the west; together with eleven sail of the line, frigates and smaller vessels galore, and a hundred merchantmen. The blow staggered Spain. Three million pounds would not have covered the loss; and her prestige was undermined. It was as if she had lost on one day a Gibraltar and a *Cacafuego*. There were three-quarters of a million to be distributed as prize-money. The victors could hardly have hoped to gain more if they had rifled with Ali Baba the den of the "Forty Thieves".

Keppel's skill and resourcefulness were loudly praised. He received nearly £25,000 and won his long-coveted flag.

No exploit in the war had been more brilliant. Yet it brought no joy to George III. The honour was not his. "If the Spaniards had lost at their own convenience, what would they have done at Pitt's opportunity?" This was the verdict.* The cry was all for Pitt's return that he might capture Peru and Mexico. To prevent this the King became a party-leader and debased the patronage and prerogative of the Crown. Newspapers were corrupted and pamphleteers suborned. Lords were intimidated and Commons bribed: and in February, 1763, the Peace of Paris was signed.

Canada was retained and Cape Breton Isle and Minorca recovered in exchange for Belleisle. But generous concessions in the East and West Indies were needed to bring France to terms; and Havana, without reason, was restored to Spain, together with Manilla and the Philippines, news of whose capture came to hand while negotiations were pending.

The Seven Years' War was followed by a period of peace. During this interval France underwent a naval regeneration.

* Horace Walpole compared the capture of Havana to the streamer left by a shooting-star after the meteor itself has disappeared.

She taught her citizens to understand that it was everybody's duty to restore the fleet, because her existence depended upon it. Contributions were demanded and given. Nothing was refused: a handful of francs or a first-rate. Nearly £1,000,000 were raised by private subscription. The metropolis built the *Ville de Paris* of 100 guns. Many a province and city followed her generous example. Within ten years of Quiberon, France had more than sixty sail of the line and trained seamen to man them all. She re-established her skill in shipbuilding and learned to turn out a three-decker in fourteen months as compared with the thirty-six required by England. She reorganized her dockyards, added to their number and laid in plentiful supplies of every requisite to anticipate the demand for material. She endeavoured to supply her fleet with brains, with a directing staff, a school of officers trained to understand the highest technical science relating to their profession.

All this she did that, when the day of battle came again, she might match her Navy with that of Britain in a spirit of confidence unknown to her since the days of Duquesne and Tourville.

England meantime made no response. She was in no position to do so. Her true interests lay buried in the dust of the political arena. George III gathered round him a new party. It comprised all who approved his dear desire to rule with his own right hand. These were the "King's Friends". They numbered among them true-hearted Tories. But such unhappily were few. The rest were mercenary hangers-on. For the King looked not for advice but unquestioning obedience. His cause prospered. Many parties strove with him. All were vanquished. Within ten years of his accession he had a Cabinet subservient to his nod, backed by a majority in Parliament that had been purchased at a price. At their head was Lord North, George's beau-ideal of a Minister. In business efficient, in debate effective, he was yet without real ambition. He did not desire to conduct a great war or inaugurate measures of social reform. He admired his master and was happy to serve him. When His Majesty made his wishes known, North gave them public expression. And nothing could disturb his charm of manner, his sweetness of disposition. The bitterest personalities failed to penetrate his armour of careless amiability. In the fiery heat of debate he would listen to trenchant criticisms

of his policy only to rise with a smile and discomfit his opponents by his serenity and self-control.

Of another type was the Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty: a clever man with great industry and aptitude for business, but a man of evil and immoral life; a man without scruples, without ideals; a man who degraded his high office, and subordinated the lasting interests of his country to the transient needs of a parliamentary majority. There is no need to credit his inventive faculties with all the horrid devices that sapped the Navy of its strength. There had been times (notably in the reign of Charles II) when money granted for urgent repairs had been squandered on worthless favourites, when the stores voted for the upkeep of the fleet had been carried off by private individuals, when pay was drawn for men who existed nowhere save in the lists which bore their names. These abuses had occurred before. But Sandwich systematized them. He revived the old devices for defrauding the service and added new tricks of his own. He would lay before Parliament a programme of new construction, obtain the necessary supplies and omit altogether to begin the work. In place of first-rates he invited designs for sixty-fours. In place of third-rates he ordered fifties. When vessels were lost or handed over in extreme old age to be broken, he made no effort to replace them and allowed many a ship needing little repair to be classed as irreparable. His nights were spent at the card-table. His days were consumed in political intrigue. For such luxuries money was essential; and the Navy funds came in handy. In the Seven Years' War the Admiralty expenditure was £3,390,000. In the seven years that intervened between the accession of Lord Sandwich to office and the outbreak of war with France, £6,472,000 passed through his hands. Yet, while France added fifty-six fine ships to her Navy and doubled its fighting force, while Spain added to a fleet, already considerable, fifteen capital ships, England struck ninety-seven off her list and added but fifty-four.

The French raised their fleet to eighty sail. The Spaniards raised theirs to sixty. But the British Navy fell to 123,—123, on paper!

THE WAR OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE
(1775) 1778 . . . 1783

The War of American Independence ought not to have been a naval war at all. Arising as it did out of disputes between the motherland and her principal colony on matters concerning imperial trade and imperial defence, it should have been as wholly an imperial war as the Great Boer War of 1899. Had it been so there could have been no battles at sea, because the Americans did not possess a navy. For three years it was a colonial war. For three years there were no battles at sea. But then came catastrophe. General Burgoyne and the British Army surrendered to the insurgents at Saratoga. Here was the opportunity for which France had waited. She knew her own Navy to be in excellent condition. She knew the condition of Britain's to be otherwise. Accepting the "Declaration of Independence" as delivering the American colonists from allegiance to their King, she concluded with them a military alliance in the spring of 1778, and embarked upon her war of revenge.

THE USHANT CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER I. THE BATTLE

July 27, 1778

As Admiral of the Blue and the recognized head of the British Navy, Keppel was instantly approached by the Government and invited to take command of the Channel Fleet. For a moment he hesitated. Like every one of distinction, he too had been drawn during the interval of peace into politics; he had gone so far as to enter Parliament. His tastes were old-fashioned. He preferred a Limited Monarchy. He loathed the quarrel with America. He felt the most unmixed contempt for the "King's Friends". Above all, though he knew little, he mistrusted Lord Sandwich's administration of the fleet. Therefore, when asked to command in chief, he hesitated. Lord Sandwich assured him that there were forty-two ships in commission and thirty-five of them manned and ready for sea. On this understanding, and because he desired to punish the French for their unwarranted interference,

Keppel consented. The news of his appointment, as the Ministry foresaw, had a tranquillizing effect throughout the country.

It was not until Keppel arrived at Portsmouth in March that he realized the appalling state of unpreparedness under which the Navy laboured. He had received assurances that there were more than forty vessels ready. He found but twenty in commission and no more than six "fit to meet a seaman's eye". He set to work to remedy the state of things. The task was not easy. Most of the ships were in want of extensive repairs and the storehouses were empty. But, if the Government were by themselves convicted, they were contrite. Every possible assistance was tendered to the Admiral. The King himself travelled down to Portsmouth, held a levee and by the distribution of honours and awards did his best to supply a stimulus. Manning the fleet, always a difficulty, was on the present occasion facilitated by the intense popularity of Keppel himself.

Things were progressing briskly, when at the beginning of May came news from Toulon of a squadron under the Comte d'Estaing on the point of setting out. Either it was intended to sail at once to America or, as in the past, to join the ships at Brest. In either case, to prevent mischief, a fleet must be sent to Gibraltar. For this service Keppel's was the only force available, and his overtaxed patience was tried still further by a command to put twelve of his ships at the disposal of Admiral Byron. To equip them he had to strip his remaining ships down to the very rigging. Even so, Byron was not gone until long after D'Estaing had passed the Rock.

About the middle of June Keppel was ready again. He had now twenty sail of the line. So small a force, considered in the light of the Admiral's well-known daring, rather alarmed the Ministry and at the last moment they inserted in his instructions a special clause, intended apparently to safeguard themselves against the man whom they employed. "If the French fleet shall be manifestly superior to yours," they wrote, "you are to return . . . for a reinforcement." The clause was offensive to Keppel, whose task, as he understood it, was to fight the French, not to count them.

When he arrived at his station off Brest four sail were seen, and to bring them in for examination, Keppel selected a little band of

frigates, among them the "Saucy *Arethusa*" whose imaginary exploits are pleasantly commemorated in a well-remembered ballad. Learning that the enemy numbered no less than thirty-two, he was in a quandary. He was loath to return and ask for more ships; especially as by doing so he would give the enemy an opportunity of putting to sea. Yet reason and honour overcame his pride. He knew his country's need of a great victory and such he could hardly promise her in a minority of twelve. It was not as if his fleet were a band of veterans. The long peace and the neglect of the Navy had offered no exercise to battle-squadrons. It might well be that he would need all the ships he could muster. Therefore, with good cause and great reluctance, he returned to Portsmouth.

He set out for the second time on 9th July with thirty ships; a fleet, be it noted, still insufficient, but the best that could be done. He had his flag in the *Victory* and, as his captain, was fortunate enough to secure Admiral Campbell, who had been with Hawke in the *Royal George* at Quiberon and carried home the news. Though no longer a captain in rank he volunteered on the present occasion out of the great love he bore the Commander-in-Chief. Second astern of the *Victory* was the old *Foudroyant*, the famous capture of the Seven Years' War. She was commanded by Captain John Jervis, who now saw service more important than any that had come his way since the fall of Quebec. The van of the fleet was under Sir Robert Harland, who fought beside Hawke at Finisterre; the rear under Sir Hugh Palliser, whose flag flew in the *Formidable*, the only prize brought home from Quiberon. Palliser was an old mess-mate of Keppel's, but had seen little of him since the last war. He was a brave man and a good fighter; had served with Saunders and Wolfe. Recently he had filled more positions than one at the Admiralty and won a baronetcy and rapid promotion. In politics he was a "King's Friend".

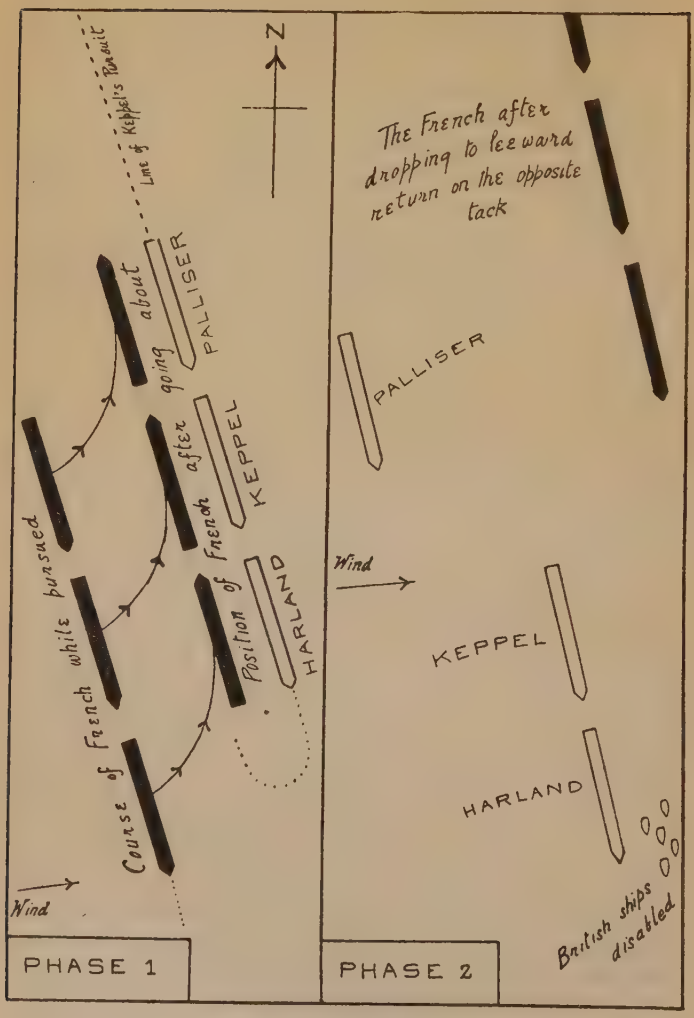
The enemy were sighted about a hundred miles to the west of Ushant on 23rd July. Keppel gave chase: but night fell before anything could be done. Next day the French had the wind and declined engagement. Keppel resolved at all costs to bring them to battle. For four days he continued the pursuit with dogged persistence, and on 27th July he had a second chance. By redoubling his efforts, by spreading every inch of canvas and trim-

ming his sails to perfection he came so near to catching them up that a rearguard action at least seemed unavoidable.

The Comte D'Orvilliers, Commander of the French, was an officer of the new school, well-versed in the science of warfare at sea. The ardour of Keppel's pursuit had robbed him of two ships which had slipped back to Brest. But he still had the same number as his adversary. And his ships were ships of the new pattern, well-built, excellently commanded and capable of the most intricate manœuvres. Though unwilling without cause to hazard all, he decided, as Keppel overtook him, that he would not allow the British to repeat the device which had proved so costly at Lagos; he would not permit his rear to be doubled upon or suffer from any massed combination. He saw a way out of his difficulties and gave the signal for the entire force to wear simultaneously.* The wind came westerly and at the completion of the movement his fleet were on the port tack making northward. [See MAP. PHASE 1. Position of the French.]

This was a subtle and clever manœuvre. It was difficult to perform. It lost the French room to leeward; and as it could hardly be carried out with mathematical exactness, it entailed a certain irregularity of line. Irregularity was a drawback. But the risk was justified by the malformation of the British. Keppel, it must be understood, had been pursuing for four days; pursuing, if not recklessly, at least with full-blooded zeal. Such a mode of advance could not conduce to the maintenance of a precise formation. He knew well enough by the demeanour of the enemy that they were not making a wild mad rush to escape. He therefore endeavoured to retain the line of battle and pursue at the same time. This was well enough for a matter of hours; not so well for four times twenty-four. By dint, however, of throwing out judicious signals to particular ships he succeeded to a certain extent. There was plenty of room for improvement. But the sudden and unprecedented behaviour of the French allowed little time. The two fleets would begin to pass on opposite tacks at firing distance before signals could be hoisted or answered. Keppel saw this at a glance and with lightning decision took (as all admitted afterwards) the only sensible course.

* To WEAR is to change a ship's course by turning her head away from the wind.



THE BATTLE OF USHANT
July 27, 1778

He hoisted the flag for battle.

It wanted still an hour to noon when the fleets began to engage. Owing to their malformation the British suffered unequally. The centre had a warmer reception than the van, the rear perhaps a warmer reception than the centre. All had however one advantage over their adversaries. The state of the wind made it impossible for many of the French vessels to open their lower-deck ports. Keppel himself was resolved to say nothing until he came alongside of the *Bretagne* carrying D'Orvilliers' flag. He endured the fire of six ships: treble-shotted his guns and waited. At last the moment came. He gave the word; and three of the *Bretagne's* gun-ports were blown into a single yawning cavity. But then the two ships passed; and the *Victory*, holding herself no longer, showed her quality to six of the enemy in turn. The *Foudroyant*, coming up astern, fought three combatants at once, D'Orvilliers in the *Bretagne*, De Guichen in the glorious *Ville de Paris* and a seventy-four, possibly the *Orient*. A warm corner; but Jervis liked it. Palliser brought up the rear in admirable fashion, backing top-sails to steady his aim.

Which side wrought the greater damage in this preliminary bout? If the battle had turned on the number of slain, then beyond question the British. They inflicted upon their foes half as many casualties again as they suffered themselves.* But in their own way the French scored too. It had long been a tradition in their service to fire on the upward roll. The men of the new régime, making a virtue of necessity, cultivated the habit. They deliberately fired at masts and sails. They loaded with langridge or scrap-iron and tore the British canvas to shreds. All ships did not suffer equally. All were not closely engaged. But when, with a view to a second bout, Harland tacked his division and followed the French, Keppel recalled him. Some of his ships could not tack at all.

The French in fact had now superior mobility and could choose their own mode of resuming the fight. D'Orvilliers' first thought was to double on the British rear. It was a formidable scheme and practicable too while he had the wind. He was foiled by the commander of his van, the infamous Egalité of the Revolution, who concealed himself in the hold and refused to execute orders.

* Their own loss amounted to 500.

D'Orvilliers looked about him for another scheme, and discovered that four or five of the enemy had become unmanageable and dropped to leeward. To leeward therefore he also dropped and turning his whole fleet about once more, bore down from the north to attack them.

Keppel, as wideawake as his antagonist, saw the thrust and rejoiced at it. Some of his ships might not be able to tack. But all could wear. Therefore he could shield the isolated band. And the best position for shielding them would place him across the path of the French whom he could never have reached if they had held their wind. Instantly he hauled down the flag for battle and carried his whole division to the new rendezvous. As he did so, the French followed astern. [See MAP. PHASE 2.]

The three divisions of the British were momentarily separated. But Keppel, to show what he wanted, hoisted the signal for the line. Sir Robert Harland took in the situation at once and, crowding on canvas, made all haste to join his chief. Sir Hugh Palliser repeated the message, but retained his position in the wind. Keppel was ready to make allowances. He could well understand that the *Formidable* had suffered severely. She had. Her casualty-list had been augmented by an explosion on board. She was gravely wounded aloft and her mainmast could hardly be trusted to carry sail. Keppel waited. His ships employed themselves with repairs. The French advanced on the starboard tack and Palliser retained his position in the wind. Keppel and Campbell stalked about the quarter-deck. They were utterly mystified. What could be happening? Not to lose a battle for want of proper signals, Keppel dispatched a frigate to notify to Sir Hugh exactly what he wanted. The frigate delivered her message and returned—without news. Keppel's vexation increased. He fretted and fumed. If the *Formidable* had been a single unit he would not have cared, but there she was at the head of her division. Nine ships neutralized at the will of a single man. What could have come over Sir Hugh? If he had been killed, the situation would have been explicable. If he had been killed, nothing would have been simpler than to have taken over the command of his ships. In the end this seemed the only course and Keppel summoned Sir Hugh's ships to his own flag, each by her distinguishing pendant. But such action was tantamount to a vote of censure.

Before the line could be completed, darkness fell upon the sea. Not for this would Keppel have delayed his attack had he had with him but half the fleet that fought at Quiberon. But the French seemed more pugnacious than usual, and his own side lacking in dash. The windward position gave him choice of time and he postponed further fighting till daybreak. Care was taken to watch the foe throughout the night, and though the weather was thick, about eleven lights were discerned. But when the morrow dawned there was from British decks not a sail to be seen. From the masthead a few ships were visible, evidently fast sailers who had been left behind to burn false lights. The French had put before the wind and used their speed to escape.

This unexpected conclusion brought Keppel at first disappointment and little else. But, as he thought of the events of the previous day, the feeling of disappointment not unnaturally changed to a feeling of resentment at the extraordinary behaviour of his third in command. Sir Hugh's offence would have been pardonable if the enemy had stayed. It appeared quite unpardonable, now that the enemy were gone. If Palliser had sent word what was wrong, or not withheld his own ships round him, the fight might have been renewed ere darkness fell, and a decisive result obtained. Keppel must have been tempted in his report to condemn his subordinate's behaviour. But by nature he was sweet-tempered. He knew that the fleet needed to pull together and not to divide against itself. Sir Hugh was opposed to him in politics and he was particularly anxious to keep politics out of the affair. He therefore wrote Lord Sandwich an account of the battle and added at its close "The spirited conduct of Sir Robert Harland, Sir Hugh Palliser and the captains of the fleet deserves much commendation".

Keppel's own disappointment may well be shared to-day. A victory of the Quiberon type in 1778 would entirely have changed the history of the world. It would have shut the French up in their own ports and rendered them incapable of assisting the Americans. The helplessness of the French would have kept Europe passive and Britain would not have been called to face the world in arms. If left to deal with her turbulent sons, uninterrupted by foreigners, she might well have subdued them. She might then in a happier hour have granted them the substance of

their demands and the great republic of North America might today still form an integral part of her world-embracing Empire.

The French did not see things as clearly as this. But they had accepted the British challenge. They had fought at sea and not been destroyed. They had struck the first blow, continued the battle while it pleased them, and at their will concluded it. Therefore, not without cause, they claimed the victory.

CHAPTER II. THE COURT MARTIAL.

The Channel Fleet was at sea till October and all worked together without recrimination for the common good. But once at home the indiscreet set to work and very soon the whole story was common property. It appeared in the "Morning Intelligencer". Naturally enough Palliser was angry; unfortunately he allowed his anger to get the better of him. He drew up his own version of the affair, satisfactorily exculpating himself: and sent the document to Keppel, plainly hinting that he could hardly do less than sign it and send it to the Press. Keppel disliked the tone of the letter and, with the best will in the world, found himself quite unable to subscribe to Sir Hugh's version of the facts. He firmly refused to add anything to what he had already written to the Admiralty. Palliser was furious and transferred his anger from the "Intelligencer" to Keppel himself. With hot impulsiveness he sat down and wrote a new version of the affair, shifting the stigma of mismanagement from his own shoulders to those of the Commander-in-Chief. This he signed with his own name and sent to the "Morning Post".

In November the matter came before Parliament. In the House of Lords many speeches were made, and the flattering references to Keppel were so congenial to those assembled at the bar that they thumped upon the floor with their canes. The House was in consequence cleared. When the matter came before the Commons both Keppel and Palliser were present as members, Palliser sitting on the Treasury Bench next to Lord North himself. Palliser courted inquiry. Keppel replied that he had no complaint against his third-in-command except the publication of the letter in the "Morning Post". The question of signals arose, and he was forced to admit that the signal to come

into his wake had been flying from three o'clock to eight without exacting obedience.

A week later Keppel received from the Admiralty an intimation that he was charged at the instance of Sir Hugh Palliser with "misconduct and neglect of duty" on 27th July, and must prepare to undergo his trial. He acknowledged the letter, and on the following day was as usual in his seat in Parliament. Palliser, speaking with considerable warmth, adduced arguments to support his contention. Keppel, in reply, reminded his hearers that he had spent forty years in the service of his country and fought in fifteen engagements. If Heaven had graced him with few talents, he had at least his life. That he was ready enough to give for his country. He only asked to be allowed to do so. For the present proceedings in which he was called in question, he thanked God that he was not the accuser. With that he left the House; and out of respect quite half of the members followed his example. In the Lobby afterwards all agreed that he had spoken with the conviction of innocence and like a man inspired.

The feeling of the country was well represented in the famous petition of the veteran admirals. Lord Hawke's name headed the list. He was an old man now and could do little; but he was not going to stand by and see Keppel maligned. He joined his name with eleven other flag-officers and in loyal but forceful language set forth to the King the urgent need of stopping the trial. It was without precedent that a subordinate officer should impugn the conduct of his superior. If such a wrong were tolerated, discipline would be destroyed. That the subordinate occupied a seat at the Admiralty aggravated his offence. Did he bring the charge as a member of the Government? Was it justice that he should as third-in-command take part in a battle, form an opinion as to the merits of his Chief, and returning resolve himself into accuser and judge? If, as Admiral commanding in the third place, he had formed an opinion adverse to Keppel's management, why had he condoned it by four months' silence? If as a member of the Admiralty Board he brought the charge, why did he choose the "Morning Post" as his tribunal? Keppel had spent a lifetime in the service of the State. What had he received in return? His reward lay in that he was regarded as the most trusted commander at sea. If the support of the Government

were withdrawn, he would lose all. Nor would the case be altered even supposing that the court-martial proved him guiltless. Mere acquittal could not restore military prestige. The discipline of the Navy, the honour of all flag-officers, the state of the Empire, the crisis of the war demanded peremptorily that the trial should be stopped.

But the trial was not stopped.

Keppel having given his word to the Provost-Marshal to surrender his person on the day appointed, arrived at Portsmouth on 7th January, 1779. It may be frankly admitted that his appearance was not that of an ordinary prisoner on his way to the gallows. Public opinion was as much stirred to its depths as it had been at the trial of Admiral Byng. But this time the tables were turned. The whole country was ready to die for the Admiral; and when he came down to be tried for his life he was accompanied by Their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester, the Duke of Portland, the Duke of Richmond and the Duke of Bolton, the Marquis of Rockingham and the Marquis of Granby, the Earl of Effingham, and Messrs. Burke, Fox and Sheridan.

Proceedings were opened before five admirals and eight captains aboard the *Britannia*. On the way thither Keppel's boat was surrounded by thirty barges of sympathetic bluejackets whose idol the prisoner was. The trial lasted for five weeks but, after the opening day, the court was transferred to Government House.

The prosecutor grounded his charge upon five supports. In the first place the prisoner had plunged into battle without waiting to order his line. This offence alone had brought Admiral Mathews to his doom. Secondly, an engagement on opposite tacks imperilled the rear of the leeward force. The British van and centre had ceased to fire while the rear was still engaged. Did van and centre tack to the relief of those who bore the burden of the day? The van alone attempted to do so; and was by the prisoner instantly recalled. Thus was the rearguard abandoned and the prisoner had failed "in time of action . . . to assist all and every of his Majesty's ships". Thirdly, in this conjuncture, the crisis of the battle it might be called, when everything turned upon an unflagging pursuit, what had been the

conduct of the Commander-in-Chief? He had hauled down the flag for battle. Was this doing "his utmost to take or destroy every ship which it shall be his duty to engage"? Fourthly, not content with one display of weakness he had chosen this moment to wear round and stand to the southward while the enemy followed astern! If this was not actual running away, what was it? And, lastly, why had the prisoner abandoned hope on the 28th? By his own showing there were vessels visible to the eastward. The English had the wind. Their line was complete. Pursuit was the obvious course. But Keppel had neglected it. For these reasons he stood attainted under the Twelfth Article of War.

> Every person in the fleet who, through cowardice, negligence, or disaffection, shall, in time of action, withdraw, or keep back, or not come into the fight or engagement, or shall not do his utmost to take or destroy every ship which it shall be his duty to engage, and to assist and relieve all and every of his Majesty's ships, or those of his allies, which it shall be his duty to assist and relieve; every such person so offending, and being convicted thereof by the sentence of a court-martial, shall suffer death.

The affair indeed looked serious enough, but the atmosphere of the court-room clouded by the indictment began to clear when the prosecutor began to call his witnesses. These were for the most part captains who had taken part in the fight. The first of them at the conclusion of the cross-examination was asked by the judges if he had upon the occasion in question noticed anything in Keppel's conduct of the battle which could be described as unbecoming in an admiral. The witness glowered for a minute at the judges as if they had been a band of unmasked conspirators; and then raising his clenched fist above his head, thundered out: "As God is my judge, NO!" At this there was a spontaneous burst of applause and nobody attempted to suppress it. Exit witness for the prosecution number one. Shortly after this, the prosecutor handed to the bench a paper of his own drafting in which he complained of the procedure of the court. He asked the bench to read it. The bench refused. He then proceeded to read it himself and was bidden to sit down.

Captain Digby, witness for the prosecution, was examined with reference to Keppel's flight. "If *he* ran away," said the witness, "I followed him!" Asked next if he himself had run away he

replied with a snap, "Certainly not!" During the examination of Palliser's flag captain it was discovered that the *Formidable's* log-book had been tampered with. There were three pages missing. The narrative was broken on 25th July and not resumed till the 28th. Keppel seized on this point and demanded the immediate summons of the master and his mates that enquiry might be made before the prosecution had time to approach them. The court smiled indulgently upon his zeal and were sure that the prosecution would conduct the case without giving ground for reproach. When the court reassembed next day, the master took the oath, and cross-examined by Keppel admitted that he had passed the previous evening in company with Sir Hugh Palliser and a couple of lawyers. After this his explanation of spilled ink and spoiled paper, however true it may have been, failed to carry conviction.

In the speech which Keppel made in his own defence perhaps the most interesting passage was that in which he explained the motives for his magnanimous dispatch. "I do not conceive," he said, "that a Commander-in-Chief is bound to disclose to all Europe in the midst of a critical service the real state of his fleet, or his opinion of any of his officers. . . . And I confess that, until Sir Hugh Palliser himself had brought out to this court all the particulars, I attributed much more to his misfortune or mistake than I now find myself authorized to do; nor did I think his conduct half so exceptional as he has proved it."

The two principal witnesses called by Keppel for the defence were Admiral Campbell and Captain Jervis. Campbell, the man who had refused a knighthood because he could not see how it would help his seamanship, was well-known as a pattern of solid integrity. He thought the world of Keppel and in some of his answers his voice grew husky as he looked at his ideal of dauntless leadership, now a prisoner with his sword's point turned towards him. For the technicalities of law-courts he had no reverence. He charged Palliser to his face with disobedience and, when the prosecution pushed home their plea that Keppel had done nothing after the fall of night, the old man turned and rent them. "The signals of the Commander-in-Chief had been so ill-obeyed by the Vice-Admiral of the Blue on the 27th that he had no hope of experiencing better treatment on the 28th."

Captain Jervis put the matter in a nutshell when he said that Albemarle, a century before, had found the remedy for a flag-officer in Palliser's position. If the *Formidable* was out of hand, he ought to have shifted his flag to another ship. At the end of Jervis's examination Keppel asked him to inform the court if he had seen anything negligently performed at any period of the battle. The future Earl St. Vincent turned from the prisoner. His eyes twinkled as they were apt to do. He asked if the question might be put to him again, not by the prisoner but by the court. His whim was granted and in a clear dispassionate voice he spoke as follows:—

"I cannot boast a long acquaintance with Admiral Keppel; I never had the honour to serve under him before; but I am happy in this opportunity to declare to this court and to the whole world that during the whole time the English fleet was in sight of the French fleet, he displayed the greatest naval skill and ability, and the boldest enterprise on 27th July; which with the promptitude and obedience of Sir Robert Harland will be subjects of my admiration and of my imitation as long as I live."

Keppel conducted his own defence and pleaded as an innocent man will do when appearances are against him. But, as a matter of fact, though he alone failed to notice it, the trial was for him a prolonged triumph. When the court assembled to hear judgment given on 11th February, 1779, the President declared the charge to be "malicious and ill-founded". He handed the Admiral his sword; and when he gave expression to the hope that it would soon be drawn again in defence of the country, the applause which drowned his words found echoes in the farthest corner of the kingdom.

The verdict was a foregone conclusion and preparations had been made to celebrate the occasion. A signal-gun informed the ships in Spithead and each thundered a happy salute. Meanwhile Keppel was escorted back to his house by the same distinguished company that had brought him to Portsmouth, augmented now by more than sixty naval captains who assembled to do honour to the universal favourite. As Keppel was Admiral of the Blue all wore blue ribbons and, while one band played "Rule Britannia," another broke in with "See the Conquering Hero Comes". Never was heard "so musical a discord, such

sweet thunder". On the 15th the *Victory* mustered all hands to welcome her Admiral back.

> See Keppel's flag once more display'd; upon the deck he stands;
> Old England's glory ne'er can fade or tarnish in his hands.
> Be England to herself but true, to France defiance hurled,
> Give peace, America, with you and war with all the world.

Meanwhile in London where the possibility of hero-worship was for the time impossible, the verdict was greeted everywhere as an irreparable defeat for the Ministry. They had attempted to make Keppel a scapegoat for their sins. Now at last they must resign, and a good riddance. The mob got entirely out of hand, though it is said the ringleaders were not of the common herd. Some affirmed that young William Pitt was out; and it is certain the Duke of Ancaster was run in. The rioters besieged the Premier's house. They broke the windows and climbed into the rooms. Further injury seemed probable, but the Horse Guards arrived in time. The mob resolved fresh mischief. They treated the house of the detested First Lord as they had treated the Premier's. Then they unhinged the gates of the Admiralty and carried them off amid cheers. But the wildest vengeance of course was reserved for the unfortunate Palliser. His house was invested. Horse and foot came to hold it. The mob held them off and stormed the position. The windows were broken, the house gutted, the furniture handed out piece by piece. All the Admiral's effects, all his possessions, were piled high in St. James's Square and burned, while the mob danced round the bonfire. Then an effigy of Sir Hugh was brought, tossed from hand to hand, beaten, trampled on, carried at last to Keppel's house in South Audley Street and burned before the door.

> Go, go, thou base Sir Hugh, Vice-Admiral of the Blue,
> Prythee be still!
> Ah! what a wicked dog, to splice the very log!
> Give him instead of grog,
> A leaden pill!

So shrieked the sellers of squibs. Even as they did so, the wretched victim of their gibes escaped from the Portsmouth mob with his life and nothing more: scrambling through back-doors, hurrying down side-streets, bruised, insulted, spit upon.*

* It was inevitable after the facts revealed at Keppel's court-martial that Palliser himself should be tried, if only for his own reputation. Happily the

When Keppel arrived in London the town greeted him with rapture. He was serenaded, fêted and caressed. Night after night there were illuminations until Keppel had placards printed beseeching those who honoured him to spare their pockets. Sir Joshua Reynolds, as enthusiastic as a boy in the cause of his friend, sent the engravers a portrait of the Admiral and the print appeared in all the shops and was eagerly sought after. Every novelty found a recommendation in Keppel's name. Every song contained a reference to him. In one of Sheridan's plays then running, a certain phrase brought down the house night after night. "As I knew I was in the wrong, I demanded a court martial on my superior." Blue of course was the only colour and Keppel's name the only toast. The Admiral was summoned before both Houses of Parliament and thanked effusively. The City went out of its way to do him honour. Eight Aldermen, thirteen Common Councillors and the City officers drove to South Audley Street in twenty carriages and begged permission to present him with their freedom. He was carried back in a monstrous procession, blue banners streaming and bands playing. At Charing Cross the horses were taken out: and a company of sailors, scrambling on the box, in less time than it takes to tell, rigged up a mast and hauled a blue ensign to the maintop. At Temple Bar there was music, and in Fleet Street brass cannon fired a salute. Keppel dined with the Lord Mayor and started home at eleven. The same scenes were re-enacted; and as the horses were never in the shafts, the transit was not over till one. And all night long fresh fires were lit, and the darkness was spangled with rockets.

Only one thing was lacking to complete the general happiness. Keppel must go at once to sea again. But this he felt was impossible. He could not bring himself to believe that the Ministers would have allowed him to undergo trial for his life if they had reposed in him that perfect trust which must exist for effectual service. Anxious though he was to meet the French, he tendered his resignation. And the Ministry accepted it.

court emulated the forbearance that Keppel had shown. They absolved him of blame and guilt, but considered that if the *Formidable* were incapable of performing further manœuvres the Admiral ought to have sent word of his condition to the Commander-in-Chief: "a censoriously acquitting sentence" it has been called.

SEQUEL

1. THE CHANNEL INVADED

The French rejoiced to see England baiting her foremost Admiral. They resolved to strike at once. They appealed to Spain. They offered to make the reclamation of Gibraltar, Minorca and Jamaica part and parcel of their own scheme of war. Spain yielded: put her navy at their service. The utmost secrecy was maintained. The Spanish ambassador in London made himself particularly pleasant to the Ministry, so that D'Orvilliers should unite the fleets without suspicion. D'Orvilliers had a difficult task. The Spaniards were backward in their preparations. Some common code of signals had to be prepared. But in August, 1779, with a combined fleet of sixty-six he sailed for the English Channel.

Fifty thousand soldiers awaited him in Normandy. He intended to ferry them across and land in the Isle of Wight.

On Keppel's resignation of the Channel Fleet, the appointment was offered to almost every Admiral of distinction in turn.* Lord Howe refused like Keppel to entrust his honour to Lord Sandwich's keeping and the others followed his example. As a last resort the First Lord offered the command to Sir Charles Hardy, the Governor of Greenwich Hospital. Sir Charles was a fine sailor. He had been Hawke's second at Quiberon and, during fifty years of service, had seen as much fighting as any man. But he was old. Thirteen years had passed since his name had figured on the active list; twenty, since last he went to sea. It was unfair to disturb his repose. It was impossible to expect a man of his age to conduct a campaign in the spirit of Keppel.

Lord Sandwich did not expect it. He sent the Admiral forth not to hurl destruction on his enemies, but to neutralize their activities, to out-manœuvre them. Sir Charles received strict orders on no account to fight. Even so he would scarcely have consented to serve, had he known of the Spanish alliance; but as against the thirty sail of France, the forty ships that the First Lord promised him seemed more than sufficient for his need.

* Not to Rodney: reasons for this will declare themselves later.

When, however, he arrived at Portsmouth in the spring of '79 he found twenty-five ships; no more! By superhuman efforts he raised this figure to thirty-five and about the middle of June set forth in the *Victory*. He hurried at once to Brest, and found the harbour empty. The French had long since sailed to join the Spaniards. Fearing mischief he sailed back for what reinforcements were ready; received two further sail; and departed again. At first he took up his station between the doorposts of the Channel, the Lizard to the right of him and Ushant to the left. But when July was come and gone and still no enemy, he ventured as far as the Scillies. In doing so he left the Channel free of entrance to all comers. But, on the other hand, if he stood in the doorway he could less easily avoid an engagement if the enemy were bent on forcing one.

D'Orvilliers and the allied fleet, seventy strong in battleships alone, reached Plymouth on 16th August. Their presence threw the whole of the southern counties into a state of trepidation. What could be done at Plymouth was done, but it was little enough. A few vessels from the scrap-heap were fitted out to bar the entrance and a few batteries thrown up at likely spots; but precautions such as these were not likely to deter a battle-fleet flushed with victory. There is a story that His Majesty's Commissioner sent a message post-haste to Court asking: "Shall I destroy the dockyard or wait until the French come in and do it?" Another story, better authenticated, tells how on a Sunday morning, when the congregation were in church, a rascally fellow had only to call out: "The French are landed!" to disperse the whole assembly. The worshippers, men and women, rushed for the door, scrambling over the backs of pews and wrestling with those in front.

Outside Plymouth, D'Orvilliers made a brilliant opening to his campaign by the capture of a sixty-four, the *Ardent*. But he had no desire to enter Hamoaze. His destination lay farther east where the army of invasion awaited him on the shores of Normandy. Farther east, however, he did not go, and when Sir Charles Hardy came up with him at the beginning of September, he was well to the west of the Eddystone.

Sir Charles Hardy skilfully avoided his antagonist and in good order retired up the Channel, anchoring when the tide ebbed to

increase his distance from his enemies. On 3rd September he dropped anchor in Spithead.

At Portsmouth the confusion was indescribable. There were no regulars and the harbour was defended solely by an antique rusty chain. The ammunition sent down was the wrong sort: the balls were too large for the guns. Panic filled the streets. Every strange sail was heralded as the first of the new Armada.

But the allies did not come. Though in theory enjoying command of the Channel, they made no use of it. Instead they sailed ingloriously home to meet a chilly reception. They made their excuses. They had been baffled, they said, by contrary winds; puzzled by contradictory orders from home. Supply ships had failed to reach them. Fever had laid them low. But their arguments did not carry conviction: and D'Orvilliers, distracted by private griefs, found the burden of blame intolerable. He resigned his commission and retired to a monastery.

The truth is that the French, except in name, never held command of the Channel. To secure control of the narrow sea it was necessary for them first to discover their antagonists and afterwards destroy them. So long as Hardy and his pack were at large, it would have been as foolish to expose a convoy of troopships, as to drive a helpless flock of sheep through a wood infested by wolves.

Hardy in fact made use of the plan recommended by Torrington in the year of Beachy Head. With a "fleet in being" he saved the State. But he received no credit for doing so; and it is not difficult to understand the reason. The blood of patriots boiled as they thought of the violation of English waters. Not thus had it been in the old days when the luckless Sidonia brought his mighty host. Howard and Drake had not feared to strike, small though their force had been. What then was to be said for a Commander who fled from his enemies! What, alas, was Britain coming to, when even in the Channel she dared not hold her own!

There was force in the argument, if little gratitude. The campaign was incompatible with the finest traditions of the service. As such it was certainly regarded in the fleet. However inadequate their numbers, however unsatisfactory their equipment, Captain Jervis still in the *Foudroyant*, and Captain Duncan in

the *Monarch* had no mind to let D'Orvilliers go unscathed. And in the *Victory* too was a great sailor, worthy of the flagship that had been Keppel's and was to be Nelson's. Richard Kempenfelt was at this time Hardy's Chief of Staff, and was already by his resource and zeal, love of science, sound learning and fluent penmanship winning for himself an enviable reputation as the best all-round sailor in the Navy. But the supreme command lay with none of these, and when the two fleets came in sight of one another, it was Kempenfelt's painful duty to promulgate orders that reduced Captain Jervis to the "most humbled state of mind ever experienced," and sent Captain Duncan to the stern-walk, where he remained pensively gazing over the water, lost in sorrow too deep for tears.

2. PAUL JONES

The allied fleet was not the only invader of 1779, nor the Channel the only waters violated. Off Flamborough Head the flag of England was humbled.

John Paul was the son of a Scotch gardener. His home was on the Solway. He went to sea in a Whitehaven merchantman, served in craft of all kinds, knew something of smuggling and the slave trade and rose to be mate and skipper. Then fortune befriended him. He inherited an estate from a brother who had emigrated, changed his name to Jones, and settled in Virginia. At the outbreak of war he offered his services to Washington and set before him a bold scheme of privateering in British seas. He crossed the Atlantic and in 1778 appeared off Whitehaven. He terrorized the coast; raided Lord Selkirk's estate and tried to hold the Earl up to ransom. A sloop-of-war, the *Drake*, put out to find him. Jones fought the *Drake*, captured her and carried her off to France.

Thus in England he gained the same notoriety that Duguay-Trouin enjoyed when William III was King. Elsewhere it was different. Napoleon said of Jones that if he had been born ten years later, he should have commanded the fleet of France and conquered Nelson. Quite recently the Americans have paid posthumous honours to the first great sailor to fly the Stars and Stripes. But in 1779, Captain Jones could not command attention; and by tireless importunity he obtained in France only a

miserable vessel little better than a hulk. She was a French East-Indiaman, long past useful service and rotten with the wear of twenty years. On her upper deck she carried twenty-eight 12-pounders; and gun-ports were pierced on a cargo-deck for six additional 18-pounders which had been discarded and condemned by the French. To man the guns, Jones collected 350 hands. They were a medley of all nations; but his will-power made a crew of them, and he had a stiffening of Americans to help. He called his ship the *Bonhomme Richard*.

On setting out for his second venture in August, 1779, he had other ships with him; but they were intractable and obeyed him only when it suited their convenience. Two only call for notice; the *Pallas*, more faithful than the others, and the *Alliance*, because her captain added to insubordination, malice and to malice, eccentricity. Jones considered him stark and staring mad. They made their way round the west of Ireland, picked up prizes, and doubled Cape Wrath.

On 23rd September they were off Flamborough Head when towards evening a squadron appeared to the northward. It was the Baltic trading-fleet, accompanied by the *Serapis*, Captain Pearson, and a little twenty-gun ship. Jones had the *Pallas* and *Alliance* at his side and determined at once to attack. The wind blew from the south-west, and Pearson seeing the danger to his convoy flung himself and the sloop in front. He was a good seaman and a brave man.

The *Serapis* and the *Bonhomme Richard* ran landwards upon the port tack and about seven o'clock a tremendous duel began which continued under the light of the moon far into the night. At the outset, fortune frowned on the *Bonhomme Richard*. Two of the condemned 18-pounders burst at their first discharge, killing their crews and destroying the timbers above them. As a consequence Jones had to relinquish his lower-deck. The *Serapis* was a fine frigate. Her armament played havoc with the rotten timbers of the *Bonhomme*, pounding them into splinters, crippling the gun-carriages, driving the gunners from their guns. Nine men out of ten with such a crazy ship would at this have abandoned the struggle. Not so Jones. He had not a gun except the little ones on the foc's'le and quarter-deck. He therefore resolved to close. The *Serapis* was fighting in splendid trim, laying herself upon his

bow, and then backing a topsail and letting him have a broadside in the stern. Jones stroked his chin, waited till the *Serapis* was on his quarter, and putting his helm up ran under his adversary's bow. A collision as he had foreseen was inevitable and, as his enemy's bowsprit crashed through his shrouds, he lashed it with his own hands to the mizen. The two ships swung broadside to broadside, grinding and crunching. Presently the *Bonhomme's* starboard anchor grappled the starboard gallery of the *Serapis*. As the tide was setting to the northward Pearson dropped an anchor, hoping to clear, but the vessels were now inseparable.

Meanwhile the little sloop maintained a plucky and unequal struggle with the *Pallas*, and that mad creature, the *Alliance*, sailed round in a demoniac's dance, firing in the direction of the struggle and hitting now the *Serapis*, now the *Bonhomme* with complete impartiality.

Locked in her enemy's embrace, the *Serapis* was literally eating up the *Bonhomme* with her double tier of guns. But Jones had his reply ready. The men who had been driven from the guns joined those already assembled in the tops, and with musketry and hand-grenades made the quarterdeck and foc's'le of the *Serapis* uninhabitable. It is said that every man was picked off except Pearson himself, who was purposely spared for his unbending fortitude. In spite of this the *Serapis* had practically won, when a well-aimed grenade was flung down her main-hatch. It exploded a heap of cartridges and the explosion spread from gun to gun, putting the whole deck out of action, killing thirty-eight men in a second of time, and grievously burning all who survived.

The *Serapis* rallied and renewed the fight: so also did her opponent. But about ten o'clock the carpenter informed Jones that the ship was sinking. The gunner hearing this would have pulled the flag down but, finding it already gone, howled aloud: "Quarter! for God's sake, quarter!" Jones hit him hard upon the head with the butt-end of a pistol. The British called out to know if he surrendered. "Surrender!" said Jones, "I am only just beginning to fight." Some busybody now, with more humanity than judgment, released the *Bonhomme's* prisoners from the hold; some hundred of them, Englishmen all. These might have settled the business. Jones rubbed his chin, told them quietly for their own safety to man the pumps. Their leader refused. Jones shot him

dead. The rest obeyed like lambs; all, but one. He clambered through a port-hole into the *Serapis* and told Pearson how the enemy were placed. Pearson called for boarders. Jones marshalled his men and repelled them. He then attempted to board the *Serapis* and Pearson flung him back.

It was now after ten o'clock and, whatever the men within them were feeling, the two ships were utterly worn out. The *Serapis*, after a gallant effort to control herself, could hold up her head no longer. Her mainmast tottered and went by the board. The *Bonhomme Richard* inch by inch was settling down in the water. Both ships were at their very last gasp.

The issue was decided by the *Alliance*. She sidled up and lay under the stern of the *Serapis*, ready to rake. This was too much for human endurance and at eleven the Union Jack came down. The sloop had surrendered some time before, and Jones had now two men-of-war in shackles. He transferred himself and the remnant of his crew to the *Serapis*, and then the *Bonhomme Richard* settled by the head and sank at her victim's side.

King George conferred a knighthood on Captain Pearson. He deserved it, if only for saving a convoy valued at half a million. Paul Jones laughed irreverently when he heard the news. "If ever I meet that man again," he said, "I'll make a LORD of him."*

Never since De Ruyter's raid had there been such a year of shame as 1779. Had there been a representative Parliament the Government could not have survived. But the general election of 1780 returned a majority favourable to the conduct of the war! Influence and corruption turned the scale everywhere. The King himself canvassed against Keppel and secured his rejection by fourteen votes.

In the midst of the election Holland was added to the number of our enemies; and, when the Empire, Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark united in an armed neutrality to dictate to England the limitations under which her sea-suzerainty should be

* Jones carried his prizes successfully into the neutral harbour of the Texel and later swaggered valorously through the Channel back to France. He was not again employed, and died in Paris during the early days of the Revolution, penniless and forgotten. His remains were recently conveyed to America and buried with honour at Annapolis.

exercised, it did certainly look as if the collapse of the British Empire was imminent.

In the following year Cornwallis and the whole British Army surrendered at Yorktown, and in the early days of 1782 the island of Minorca was lost. Such a succession of disasters upset even the equanimity of Lord North. He threw up his arms as if he had been shot, and exclaiming, "O Lord, it's all over!" refused any longer to remain in office. His successors belonged to the National party as opposed to the "King's Friends". They chose Keppel to preside at the Admiralty, and he held the wheel till the war was over. The King henceforth eschewed politics and, making amends for past unkindness, raised his new First Lord to the peerage as Baron Elden and Viscount Keppel. No sea-commander had been rewarded with so high an honour since the elder Byng swept the seas at Passaro.

Keppel's appointment to the Admiralty Board healed the sad breach which had cleft the Navy. Lord Howe, at the call of his old friend, took command of the Channel, and all the trusted flag-officers whom Sandwich had alienated laid once more their swords before the throne.

Keppel's practical experience was invaluable in setting things to rights. And there was much more to be done than a working-day supplied time for. To tell of the ships he built, of the abuses he removed and of the needs that he supplied would be tedious. Yet mention must be made of three changes that proved of lasting use.

The old wooden walls mounted their guns on a certain number of decks.* The "seventy-four," for example, the typical two-decked battleship mounted twenty-eight guns on the gun-deck (fourteen on either broadside), twenty-eight on the main deck and eighteen on the upper. But these weapons varied in size from the 6- to the 42-pounder. Guns of the largest calibre were mounted on the gun-deck only.† The quarter-deck and

* A deck must be thought of as a *room*, not as a *platform*. Thus a three-decker had four tiers of guns, the fourth being mounted on the roof of the third floor. A single-decked frigate had two tiers of guns; and a corvette had one, though she possessed no real deck properly so called.

† Hence the name. The junior officers had their quarters in the *gun-room*, or after part of this deck.

foc's'le carried the lightest armament. There was a natural tendency to make the gun as large as possible. Keppel struggled against this. Weight, he argued, must be sacrificed to handiness. He abolished the 42-pounder and made the 32-pounder the standard main armament. So it remained till the Crimean War. The 32-pounder weighed three and a half tons and required a team of fourteen men. It was nine feet long * and at extreme range would carry a mile and a half. Each weapon cost £50 and took seven days to make.† The ball was six inches in diameter ‡ and as it could penetrate five feet of oak, the two feet of a ship's side offered little protection at close quarters.§

But if Keppel rejected one gun he introduced another. This was the Carronade.|| It was handy. It required only four men. It was a squat little thing, measuring in some cases not more than two feet. It was therefore an ideal weapon for the upper deck.¶ It was no use except at close quarters, but what it lacked in range

* Thirty-two-pounders were often called "Long Nines".

† Cp. the *Dreadnought's* main armament. Each gun cost £11,000 and took from twelve to fifteen months to make.

‡ The 42-pound ball was as large as an Association football.

§ The following scheme will show the arrangement of guns in representative ships:—

First-rate.	Seventy-four.	Sixty-four.	Frigate.
Upper deck: 12 lbr.	Upper deck: 9 lbr.	Upper deck: 6 lbr.	Upper deck: 6 lbr.
Main deck: 12 lbr.	Main deck: 18 lbr.	Main deck: 12 lbr.	Main deck: 12 lbr.
Middle deck: 24 lbr.	Gun deck: 32 lbr.	Gun deck: 24 lbr.	
Gun deck: 32 lbr.			

The finest frigates mounted 18-pounders on the main deck and for this reason were often referred to as "18-pounder frigates".

|| Made at the Carron Ironworks, Scotland.

¶ The upper deck consisted of quarter-deck and forecastle. The quarter-deck extended from the mainmast to the break of the poop and was joined to the forecastle by narrow balconies called *gangways*.

it made up in destructiveness. It would take a 32-pound shot as comfortably as a "Long Nine" and smash it through the enemy's side in the ugliest way imaginable.

Lastly, Keppel made general for warships a copper-sheath below the water-line. It defied the barnacles that clustered and the worms that burrowed. It gave to the first-rate the speed of a frigate.*

Keppel retired from office when the war ended. He did not approve the Peace of Versailles. He thought Rodney's victory entitled Britain to better terms and would have prolonged the war to obtain them.† He died three years after the Peace at the age of sixty-one. The hardships he endured in the *Centurion* made early inroads on his health, and the Cuban campaign undermined it. But he never complained, though each recurrence of fever left him weaker for the next attack. He himself was prepared; but when the end came suddenly, the world was amazed, counting him comparatively young, as indeed in appearance he was.

In stature the Admiral was short. The sailors all referred to him as "Little Keppel". Early in life he was assaulted by footpads and received a blow across the face with the butt-end of a pistol which shattered the bridge of his nose. This accident gave his face an odd appearance. At first sight a stranger would wonder whether the object of his gaze was uncommonly handsome or uncommonly the reverse. His perplexity would be removed by the Admiral's beaming radiant smile, which conquered all hearts but Sir Hugh Palliser's.

* Other devices had been tried, sheet-lead which proved too heavy, a layer of pitch, and even a layer of deal which the worm found less appetizing than oak. The introduction of copper was unduly delayed because it corroded the iron bolts which held the planks together.

† He disapproved even more strongly of Rodney's recall and entered the most emphatic protest against it. See below, pp. 113-14.

RODNEY

BORN 1719—DIED 1792

The West Indies is the station for Honour.—NELSON.

GEORGE BRYDGES RODNEY came of an ancient family. Sir Richard Rodeney fought beside the Lion-Heart at Acre. But long before that the Rodeneys had been settled at Stoke Rodeney in Somersetshire, and for five hundred years the family estates were handed down in unbroken succession. Rodney's father did not inherit them; for they passed away with a Rodney heiress of an elder branch into the Brydges family. But by the Brydges' influence he obtained command of the Royal Yacht and this brought him under the favourable notice of King George I, who was pleased to stand godfather to the Captain's eldest son.

Little enough is known of Rodney's early life. He was educated for a time at Harrow, but at twelve went to sea as a King's Letter Boy. He was the last officer to enter the Navy this way, for Lord Torrington of Passaro was at that time founding a Naval College at Portsmouth.* At twenty Rodney received a commission just as the Austrian Succession War broke out. He served under Admiral Mathews who gave him his first ship; and under Admiral Vernon. And then in a happy day Fortune threw him with Hawke; and he took part in the Battle of Finisterre. One of the six prizes of that great victory was of his taking; and on his return home he was presented by Lord Anson to the King. His Majesty, struck by Rodney's youthful appearance, exclaimed

* Even so the majority of those who found their way to the quarter-deck entered the service in the first instance as "Captain's servants". This form of apprenticeship did not involve any menial duties. The Captain was allowed so many servants and in place of one would take to sea a relative of his own or the son of an old friend.

that he had no idea that he had so young a captain in his service. "If all young captains were like Captain Rodney," said Lord Anson, "I could not wish Your Majesty anything better than the possession of a hundred of similar age;" high praise from any lips, and coming from Lord Anson enough to establish the young man's claim to high command.

In those days of brocade and lace Rodney was beyond doubt an "elegant". His slim figure, his refined features, his thin, masterful nose and sharp chin proclaimed the aristocrat. He moved by right of birth in the highest circles. He was always perfectly dressed. He was fastidious. He loved the grave compliment and courteous phrase. He passed with graceful ease through the drawing-rooms. His delight was the gaming-table. But behind all this there was something else. His supercilious air vanished when he drew his sword. His silken suavity, as his enemies found, concealed a nice taste for the biting epigram. And if at White's and Almack's he derived no other advantage, he at least learned to accept the supreme hazard not only ashore but at sea.

During the Seven Years' War, Rodney served with distinction under both Hawke and Boscawen. He missed Quiberon and Lagos; but found consolation: for in 1759 he received his flag, being then forty years of age. He added to the wonders of "The Wonderful Year" by coolly destroying at Havre the flat-bottomed boats of the Invasion Scheme; and in 1761 passed for the first time to the great sea-province which he was to make so peculiarly his own, and, in Nelson's words, "The Station for Honour".

THE LEEWARD ISLANDS

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY

When the Seven Years' War broke out both England and France had settlements among the Lesser Antilles. They had acquired them not from the Spaniards. The Spaniards never cared for "little islands". They had acquired them from the Caribs. The French with their winning manners and complaisant acceptance of tribal customs had established themselves securely in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the largest links in the chain. The British by pluck and hardihood had found a footing in Barbados and St.

THE LESSER ANTILLES

Kitts. And St. Kitts had gathered round her a little family which included Nevis, Antigua, and Montserrat. Everywhere else the Caribs held their own.

To the mariners of Rodney's day the Lesser Antilles seemed like a line of battleships irregularly drawn up,* for they stood exposed to a constant invariable breeze which not only gave a relative value to their port or starboard coastlines, but gave to those that were farthest east the same advantage that a seventy-four would enjoy with the wind in her favour. To run from Barbados to St. Lucia was always an easy matter. It was a longer process to tack and tack from St. Kitts to Martinique.† Hence arose the distinction between the Windward and Leeward groups: the little isle of Marie Galante dividing them.

The French head-quarters were at Martinique. Here at Fort Royal they had a harbour, second to none in the Antilles. Barbados had a prouder position,‡ and should have dominated the whole array from St. Eustatius to Grenada. But Barbados unhappily had nothing more accommodating than a roadstead. The British were forced therefore to look elsewhere for a base and their choice was Antigua. The island was not too far to leeward, and had harbours enough for all. Rocks, shoals and reefs spoiled most of them, but at English Harbour on the south-east ships of the line found a tolerable haven, while a subsidiary base was provided for vessels of lighter draught at Frigate Bay in St. Kitts.

Such was the Leeward Islands Station to which Rodney was appointed. On his arrival he heard that Guadeloupe had fallen an easy prey to the enterprise of his countrymen.§ Martinique then was clearly the next point of attack. But it was deemed impregnable: and seemed likely to prove so; for though he landed the soldiers by a clever ruse, the fortified hills that surrounded

* Not in size. Though small in comparison with Jamaica (= half Wales), they have an appreciable acreage. St. Vincent is identical in size with the Isle of Wight, and the others may be judged by comparison.

† The ship that sailed from Antigua to Jamaica in seven days required at least three weeks to return.

‡ Barbados lies a hundred miles to eastward of St. Vincent; and Martinique as far to eastward of St. Kitts as Portsmouth lies from Plymouth.

§ Desirade, Marie Galante and The Saints are part and parcel of Guadeloupe and are lost and won with it.

Fort Royal were by infantry unassailable. To take the place, the General said, would require batteries drawn by chamois.

Rodney hearing this set his blue-jackets ashore and their work has been described by an appreciative eye-witness. "You may fancy you know the spirit of these fellows; but to see them in action exceeds any idea that can be formed of them. A hundred or two of them, with ropes and pulleys, will do more than all your dray-horses in London. Let but their tackle hold, and they will draw you a cannon or mortar on its proper carriage up to any height, though the weight be never so great. It is droll enough to see them tugging along with a good 24-pounder at their heels. On they go, huzzaing and hallooing, sometimes up-hill, sometimes down-hill; now sticking fast in the brakes, presently floundering in the mud and mire; . . . as careless of everything but the matter committed to their charge as if death or danger had nothing to do with them." They won the unbounded admiration of the soldiers, who vied with them in friendly fashion and brought their task to a triumphant conclusion. "I have the honour to congratulate you," wrote Rodney home, "on the surrender of the most important citadel in these parts."

It was not as such that the King and Lord Bute valued it. They were grateful for Martinique. They made the young Admiral a baronet. But they used his conquest as a bribe to France in their impolitic scramble for peace.*

Rodney returning home found every one immersed in politics. Though he was not a politician in the true sense, yet for a time he entered with zest into the game, considering money well spent that kept him professionally before the eyes of Ministers. But seats in Parliament grew expensive. He contested Northampton in 1768 and the election cost £30,000. He won the seat but emptied his coffers. Other forms of financial embarrassment followed and, unable to maintain on half-pay the generous scale of living which his friends expected, Rodney decided to leave London and save his pocket by voluntary exile. The whole

* Guadeloupe was also restored. But England insisted on the partition of the Carib Isles, which were divided as follows:—

FRANCE—St. Lucia.

ENGLAND—Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada, the Grenadines and Tobago. This arrangement is important in view of what follows.

family forthwith migrated to Paris and there they abode some years.

When France decided to take the part of the revolted American colonists, no one alive could have ventured to predict of the English sailor resident in Paris that he was destined to achieve a fame equal to Hawke's. In the first place he was already in his sixtieth year: and with age had come age's drawbacks. He was gouty and infirm. Was this then the man to deliver Britain from perils deadlier than any that had yet beset her? France and America in arms against her! Spain and Holland waiting the moment to strike! The Baltic Powers exacting and insolent! Could a gouty subject sixty years of age be of service? Not impossibly. But for the present he was in France and to all intents a prisoner there. The widening of his circle and his own hospitable nature had piled upon his shoulders a fresh burden of debt: and it was impossible to leave Paris without honourable payment.

Early in 1778 he wrote to Lord Sandwich offering "at this important crisis to go on any enterprise whereby I may show my attachment to His Majesty". His hopes rose high as he wrote: but Lord Sandwich chose to forget him. Hurt by the neglect, Rodney concluded that it was due to his absence from Court and Admiralty. But how to get there without gold? The Government owed him arrears of pay, but he deemed it unwise to press for them. Lady Rodney repaired to London to solicit the kind offices of English friends. She failed in her errand; and knew not where to turn, when she was suddenly cheered by a letter from the Admiral telling her that a chivalrous friend, no less a person than the Maréchal de Biron, had offered to advance him money to satisfy his creditors. Twice the Maréchal renewed his offer, and twice Rodney refused. Naturally enough feelings of delicacy made him reluctant to accept from a foreigner what had been denied him by his countrymen. But he craved to be gone; and when De Biron for the third time approached him, kindly persuasions proved irresistible. The fact that Rodney lived to achieve a crowning mercy for Britain at the expense of De Biron's compatriots lends the incident a piquant flavour.

Rodney reached England in May. He first arranged for the

repayment of the Maréchal's loan. He then proceeded to jog the First Lord's memory by means of a Memorandum dealing with the conduct of maritime warfare on the farther side of the Atlantic.

In this remarkable essay he pointed out that the services of the fleet in America were twofold. It was called upon to perform duties off the coast of New England. It was called upon to protect the British possessions in the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Such demands presupposed the need of a considerable force. But he went on to show that the disposition of ships, if rightly administered, might lead to a considerable economy in numbers. On the coast of North America the weather required the withdrawal of ships into winter-quarters during the inclement months after October. But in the West Indies the hurricane season terminated in the selfsame month in which the northern winter began. Two fleets then were unnecessary. The same ships could be used from October to May at St. Kitts and at Sandy Hook from May to October.*

From this Rodney passed to another point. At the conclusion of the Seven Years' War, he admitted, he had been grievously disappointed at the cession of Martinique. At that date he had considered it essential to secure Britain's hold on the Antilles. But in the interval France had had ample time to strengthen the vulnerable spot which had then with so much difficulty been found. And it would be mistaken strategy to waste strength on Martinique, when the neighbouring island was for many reasons better worth the cost of conquest. St. Lucia, he pleaded, had by far the finest harbour in all the Lesser Antilles. Moreover it occupied a dominant position. It overlooked the French headquarters. It headed the line of British possessions in the Windward Isles. . It had the weather gauge, so that a fleet centred there could always carry relief to Antigua and the Leewards. For these reasons he ventured to suggest an immediate attack. St. Lucia was as vital for a West Indian campaign as Gibraltar for a Mediterranean.

* This is the Hurricane Rhyme of Rodney's sailor-men :—

June — Too soon !
July — Stand by !
August — Go you must !
September— Remember !
October — All ober !

This invaluable document with its unusual foresight and masterly grip should have secured for its author the instant command of the Leeward Islands station. That it did not do so must not be set down in the indictment of Lord Sandwich. He recognized the value of the advice. But all the appointments had been made. Keppel commanded in the Channel, Lord Howe was at Sandy Hook, and Samuel Barrington had already sailed for Antigua. Rodney's absence had served him ill.

But in one respect his sojourn abroad had been actually advantageous. He had missed the acrimonious dissensions of Whigs who supported the Americans; and Tories who backed the King because the King opposed the Whigs. He had been thrown with Frenchmen and listened to conversations where the conduct of his country had been called in question in a fashion which no Briton could tolerate. He was in consequence better able than those who stayed at home to see where Britain's interests lay. His vision was undimmed by the dust of political faction. He was not so pronounced a Tory as to consider the support of George's ministers more important than the national welfare. But on the other hand he did not consider the worthlessness of a minister formed any sound argument for refusing to serve his King. As for his Majesty's attitude to the war, it called for his unfaltering support. Any one who dared to strive with Britain was either an enemy undisguised or a rebel unregenerate. For all such, French or American, there was but one possible treatment. They had appealed to the sword, let them feel the edge of it.

Rodney loved to talk. He was voluble and argumentative.

The Whigs washed their hands of him. They explained and he listened. Yes, they were quite right: perfectly right. Lord Sandwich ought to go, undoubtedly. But meanwhile he was there and could not be removed. What of that? The country bled. Her enemies closed round. First let the Midianites be scattered and slain. Time enough afterwards to dispatch a scapegoat to the wilderness. As a party man Rodney, it will be seen, was a heretic whichever way you look at him. But the condemnation of the Whigs won him the regard of the King. And so at last the tide of his ill-fortune turned. After patient waiting throughout '78 and the best part of the following year, he

succeeded at last to the very station to which from the first he had hoped to return.

Much meanwhile had happened there.

CHAPTER II. ST. LUCIA. 1778

The Hon. Samuel Barrington may claim to rank with Jervis and Duncan foremost among the disciples and friends of Keppel. Born in 1729 he received his first big ship in 1757 and attended Sir Edward Hawke to Rochefort. In the "Wonderful Year" he was Rodney's captain at Havre and two years later established his reputation by distinguished service under Keppel at Belleisle.

In 1778 he received his flag and set out to establish British prestige in the Lesser Antilles. The station had acquired a new importance. In their recently concluded treaty Congress had refused to allow France to pursue her ambitions on the American continent and France had bargained for a free hand in the Indies. Yet Barrington received a total force of two sail of the line!

He was therefore powerless to help when the Governor of Dominica sent him word that he was beset by a French armada.

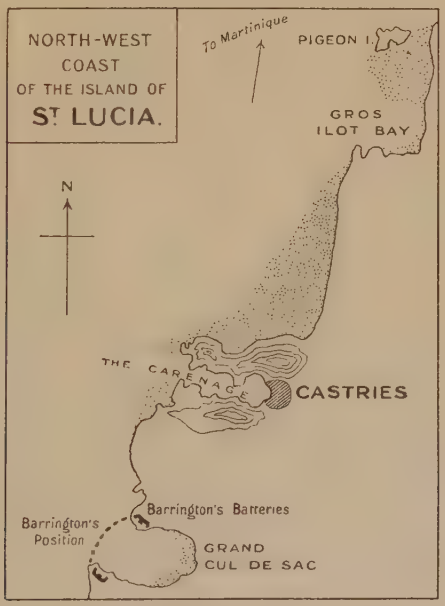
Thus the first of the British islands was lost.

After six months' delay, in December, 1778, reinforcements arrived; two more battleships and three wretched little fifties. Poor stuff for a fighting line; but they brought sixty transports and a landing force of 5000. Barrington deemed it high time to strike a blow for his country. So he trimmed his sails and turned his prows to the isle of the "Memorandum".

St. Lucia is a pear-shaped island, twenty-one miles in breadth and forty-two in length. It is wild and picturesque. In the centre are mountains whose fantastic shapes amaze the traveller. Their lower slopes are densely wooded and watered by headlong streams. On the north-west of the island lay the harbour of Rodney's dream, the Valetta of the West; in those days simply known as the Carenage, to-day Castries; a perfect haven, more than a mile in length, with an entrance 200 yards in width, deep, secure, landlocked, safe even through the hurricane months: and flanked on either hand by subsidiary basins, on the south the Grand Cul de Sac, on the north Gros Ilot Bay.

Barrington arrived at St. Lucia on 13th December. He dropped anchor in the Cul de Sac; and at once landed his troops. They did their work well. The St. Lucians were off their guard and the 5000 established themselves on high ground overlooking the Carenage. Barrington was about to shift his quarters and force the harbour mouth, when the fleet of France with dramatic effect appeared upon the scene.

The French were led by the Comte d'Estaing, a remarkable



ST. LUCIA

man of ancient lineage who had risen to high rank in the army of France. He was a soldier by choice and by instinct: but had been induced by his monarch to change his profession and set before the sailors a new pattern of reckless bravery. He had a fine force. His soldiers with those already on the island made up an army half as big again as that of the Britons he had trapped. And he was even stronger in ships. He had twelve sail of the line.

The odds were heavily against Barrington: but deliberately and without a suspicion of flurry he drew up his tiny force broadside on across the mouth of the Cul de Sac. And into the recesses of the bay he warped his convoy where they would be sheltered behind his guns. It was well to put on a bold front, for his four ships and three little fifties looked anything but imposing.

D'Estaing would have preferred that his enemy should either run away or else come out to sea where a proper ring could be formed. To enter the Cul de Sac by force, to slip round the end of Barrington's line required more seamanship than he possessed. However he resolved to moor his superior force alongside the British and blow them into the air. A good resolution: but the Trade Winds thwarted it. So he stood along Barrington's line and delivered his port broadsides. Barrington received them, or some of them; returned the compliment; and waited for more. D'Estaing returned northward and emptied his starboard guns, but without much effect, as it seemed. The whole manner of proceeding was to him tame, dilatory, absurd. Give him a regiment to lead, a bastion to storm, a forlorn hope to encourage and he knew where he was. But the game of long bowls with a line of anchored ships led to nothing. To himself his duty was clear. He must go ashore, and fling the invaders into the sea. So he landed his troops, 7000 of them, to the north of the Carenage. Three times he put himself at their head, and, sword in hand, led them against the British position. He was met by a galling fire. His own bravery was well matched. And when he had lost 800 men without gaining an inch of ground, he repaired once more to the fleet with a new insight into the need for destroying Barrington.

But his land operations had consumed a week and Barrington was less willing than ever to be destroyed. He had drawn his own ships farther into the bay to render them less accessible: and to protect his flanks he had erected on either side of the Cul de Sac batteries made by his seamen and armed with his own spare guns. D'Estaing was a little out of conceit with himself. It was not his custom to fail on land: and he had failed. He did not feel any the likelier to succeed on the water. He did his best. But it was no use. He could make nothing of it. Barrington's force seemed as immovable as the rest of the landscape.

So he went away in a rage. Whereupon the island garrison in despair hauled down their flag and St. Lucia passed into British hands. Rodney's dream was come true. For their Portsmouth in the West the Navy now had the Carenage, cosy, comfortable, luxurious; and Gros Ilot Bay stood for a roomy parade-ground, the Spithead of the Antilles.

CHAPTER III. THE BATTLE OF GRENADA. JULY 6, 1779

If ever a man had the gift and knack
Of sheer disaster 'tis Foulweather Jack.

The force that tried to turn Barrington out of St. Lucia was not allowed to leave Europe without some attempt being made to stop it. It may be remembered that Keppel's difficulties in the Ushant campaign were much increased by an order to equip a flying squadron. After some delay the force set sail under Admiral the Hon. John Byron, commonly known to the foremast hands as "Foul-weather Jack". This was the ill-fated mariner who formed one of Anson's company on the voyage round the world until the *Wager* went aground. Since those days he had written a fine account of his adventures; received rapid promotion; and himself conducted a voyage round the world in search of flying islands and new continents. The Byrons came of a good old cavalier family: the first Lord Byron fought at Edgehill and Marston Moor. "Foul-weather Jack" was a younger son of the fourth Baron: and there was not a sailor in His Majesty's dominions who had a more intimate acquaintance with the sea in all her moods, or a wider knowledge of seamanship in all its branches.

But though Byron had adopted the sea as a mother, she refused to accept him as a son. As soon as he put out of port she worked herself into such paroxysms of passion that any one else would have tired of her waywardness and become out of pique a landsman.

Byron left England in the *Princess Royal* with *thirteen* sail of the line. They were embarked on summer seas. It was July. But before a month was out the weather broke. Rigging gave way. Courses split. Spars collapsed. There had been sickness too from the start and the vessels were undermanned. The storm increased. Masts went by the board. Scurvy paid all the ships

a visit. There was no keeping the squadron together. They parted. Some were driven all the way home. One reached Sandy Hook. Others made different ports of North America. Byron himself struggled gamely on and at last arrived, shattered and disabled, at Halifax. By September he collected his brood, set to work with a will to repair his damages and in October started again. But again he met with storms and tempest. One ship foundered. Others were driven back to England. The rest sought safety in port.

Such was the proverbial luck of "Foul-weather Jack"! But he stood over six foot high in his shoes and cared as little for the breezes as his ancestor John for "Pym and his carles" when he defended Chester for the King.

In January, 1779, he at last arrived in the Indies and took over the command from Barrington And now for a time there was repose. Both sides awaited the moment to strike. Both received from home accessions of strength. Before long Fort Royal and the Carenage each contained a fleet of some twenty sail commanded by an Admiral of mettlesome temperament. In June the British merchantmen demanded convoy. Byron was obliged to go north, pick up the threads of commerce at St. Kitts and draw them safely through the danger zone. No sooner was his back turned than out came D'Estaing. St. Vincent was his object. The English garrison had their hands full with the Caribs. They were taken unawares and meekly submitted. There was no harbour in St. Vincent to compensate for the Carenage, but D'Estaing felt the prestige of his country re-established and when he received still further reinforcements, he proceeded to take Grenada also. Grenada had 150 men for its defence. They were stout-hearted but powerless to resist 7000. D'Estaing captured Georgetown the capital, and to his shame put the place to the sack.

When Byron returned to St. Kitts and learned the news, he blamed himself for safeguarding the merchantmen at so heavy an expense. But he burned for revenge: and in a fine fury scurried away southward with twenty-eight transports for his troops and twenty-one sail of the line.

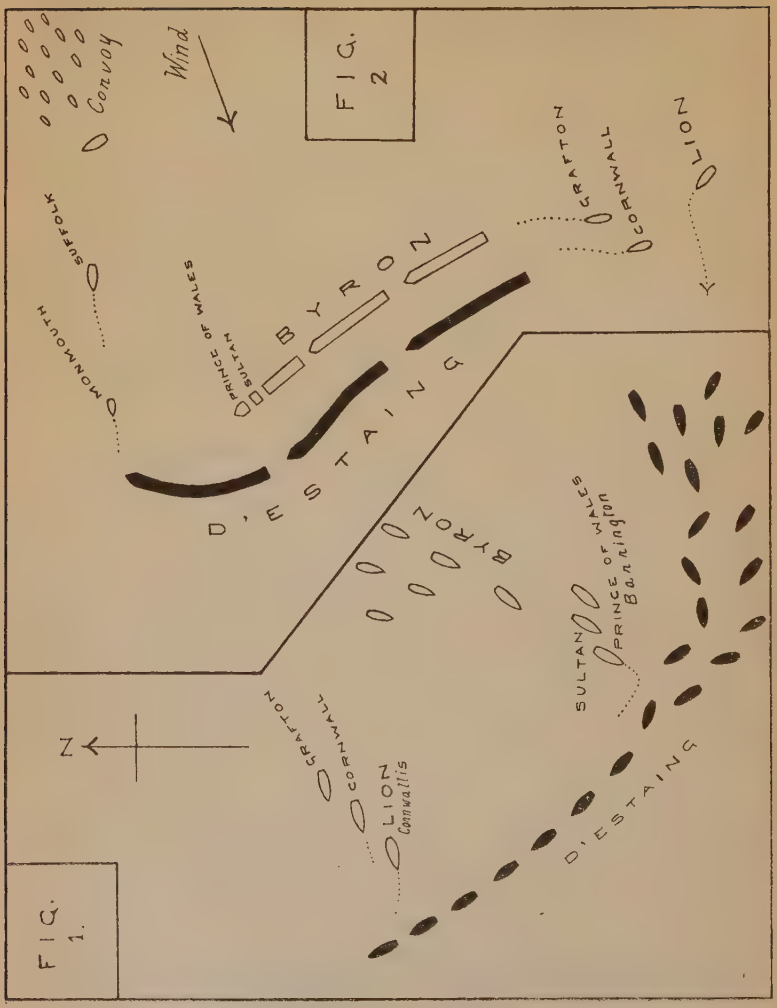
> "We'll rid the seas of this vermin pack
> And I'll be huntsman!" quoth Foulweather Jack.

Grenada, loveliest of all the western isles, was sighted on the morning of 6th July. The French fleet were lying off Georgetown, to all appearance quite unprepared. Byron thought that he had caught them napping. But this impression, unhappily for himself, was only in part correct. He did not, as he supposed, bring the first tidings of his own approach. D'Estaing had heard on the previous evening, and all night had been preparing to move. By dawn several ships had weighed anchor and all knew what they had to do. D'Estaing had not been trained as a sailor; but just in proportion as things grew warmer, he grew cooler. He watched the manœuvres of his adversary with interest rather than alarm.

Byron did not know this: nor did he know that D'Estaing had received fresh ships and now outnumbered him. He expected to find his enemies disconcerted. Everything confirmed the impression. Most of them were huddled together in a tangled mass inshore. Some were straggling out to sea. The wind, as ever, blew from the east and obliged him to advance on the port tack: but those in the roadstead had the wind behind them, and would escape with certainty if he stayed to form the line. He must smite at once; swoop down upon the enemy as Hawke at Quiberon. He hoisted the signal for a "general chase," but not before he had singled out a little band of three to guard the convoy. His captains struggled each as he could to reach the Frenchmen first. But Barrington won. He dashed ahead, out-distanced everybody and flung himself into battle with a superb impetuosity worthy of his master Keppel, and in striking contrast to the silent restraint which had marked his operations in the Cul de Sac. Captain Alan Gardner in the *Sultan* pressed closely in his wake.

The French officers were men of the new school. They were skilful seamen, ready to fight. As the members of a "Fifteen" will break from a scrimmage and trail away to "line out" across the field; so D'Estaing's ships made speed from the anchorage and worked their way north-west on the starboard tack. As they did so each ship poured a raking broadside into the devoted and isolated band that formed the front of the British chase. [MAP. FIG. 1.]

The battle developed so rapidly along lines to him so utterly strange that Byron may well have wondered what his next move



THE BATTLE OF GRENADA

July 6, 1779

ought to be. It was characteristic of him that he hoisted the signal for closer action, so that each ship might please herself provided she hit out hard enough. By this signal he virtually transmitted the direction of the fight to Barrington; who, finding no sense in being bombarded by every French vessel in turn, wore his ship and made north alongside of them. Gardner followed him: and the rest, as they could, fell in astern. The battle might now have proceeded in normal fashion if the opposing forces had been equally matched. But they were not. To D'Estaing's twenty-five sail Byron had no more than twenty-one, and three had been detached to guard the convoy. He was outmatched by four to three and his leading ships had been mauled. Nor was this the sum of his misfortunes. As the battle opened the *Grafton*, *Cornwall* and *Lion*, well forward in the chase, had run off the wind and made for the leaders of the enemy as if to head them off. In a hunting-field their action was natural enough. But in the face of an enemy eager for fight and moving in orderly array, it amounted to veritable suicide.

The blame for this incorrigible piece of bravery must be ascribed to the captain of the *Lion*, a man of a jovially round red face, known by one of a hundred nick-names "Coachee," "Mr. Whip," "Billy Blue," "Blue Billy" and "Billy-go-tight"; more properly, the Honourable William Cornwallis, a younger brother of the general who was at this time fighting gallantly for a losing cause in North America. Cornwallis's attack was directed at the Frenchmen ahead of Barrington. There may have been seven; there may have been ten; there may have been more. But certain it is that before Barrington and the rest came up to rescue them the *Grafton*, *Cornwall* and *Lion* had received the fire of nearly half the enemy's line. They were much hurt. They were unequal to further exertion and drifted to leeward of the battle proper, leaving Byron with fifteen ships opposed to twenty-five.

The extreme danger to the British lay now to northward of the battle-field. [MAP. FIG. 2.] Here lying under the land were the helpless convoy with their thousands of men on board; and here were the arrogant advance guard of the French, unopposed and ripe for mischief. A perilous situation was saved by a single ship. One of the three guarding the convoy was the *Monmouth*. She was a small ship, only a sixty-four. But the same heart beat

in her as in her ancestress who conquered the *Foudroyant*. Captain Fanshawe positively had only a single advantage. He lay to windward of the battle. Without hesitation he flew down upon the head of the French line to hold it till the remainder of the British came up. The *Monmouth* was followed by the *Suffolk*, and the delay occasioned to D'Estaing was to Byron invaluable.

The crisis passed.

D'Estaing had still another card to play. As the Britons threw themselves upon his van, he swung his whole line about and went south on the opposite tack. The menace was now transferred to the *Grafton*, *Cornwall* and *Lion* in the very rear of Byron's line and to leeward of it. Byron tacked at once to parry D'Estaing's thrust. But the peril was extreme. What were the three to do? They could not tack, and to wear would carry them into the jaws of death. D'Estaing's heart leapt within him. When had it been the honour of a Frenchman to meet the Britons in fair fight, outmanœuvre them, beat them and capture three prizes? But the game was not up yet. The *Grafton* and *Cornwall*, though badly mauled, could still show fight. Therefore they did none of the obvious things. They neither tacked nor wore. They gallantly sailed straight on, entering again into the zone of fire, passing successively ship after ship: but at the same time drawing behind them like a screen the whole of their own fleet, now advancing southward with the wind in hand.

And the *Lion*? The *Lion* had only one mast. But Cornwallis having secured his colours in a conspicuous position rigged all the sail his single stick could carry and with delightful impudence put up his helm and ran before the wind under the very nose of the whole French cavalcade, like a ragged urchin in London streets holding up a Lord Mayor's procession.

> Our foes, the parley-voos
> At this feat of "Billy Blue's"
> Professed themselves astonished—étonnés.

They certainly made no effort to follow him.

The battle ended at this point. The English to windward had the option of renewing the fight but without the prospect of success. D'Estaing claimed a victory and the unbiassed inquirer will allow his claim to be just. For with what object did Byron

throw down the gauntlet? Did he hope to retrieve Grenada? His injuries forced him to retire and leave D'Estaing in possession. Or did he fight to show who was lord of the sea? Then just as clearly he failed. For if he had not himself been brought to his knees he certainly did not reduce his foe to that position. And in such a bout it is the challenger who loses.*

Of the British commanders both now disappear. Barrington, who had been through the hottest of the fray, was wounded and returned to England. Hailed on his arrival as the conqueror of St. Lucia, he was offered command of the Channel fleet. It is much to be regretted that he did not accept it. But he had the example of Keppel before him and refused a position of such grave responsibility while Lord Sandwich remained in office. As for Byron, he too was invalided home. The West Indian climate and his ill-success induced a nervous fever. He was never again employed.

Thus the stage was cleared for Admiral Rodney who accepted the command of the Leewards station in October, 1779.

THE MOONLIGHT BATTLE

JANUARY 16, 1780

The chief action of his life in which merit and success met.—MAHAN.

Nebba see de day
Dat Rodney run away!
Nebba see um night
Dat Rodney cannot fight.
—BARBADIAN NIGGER-SONG.

When Rodney at last emerged from dull obscurity into the full glare of the limelight, he did so at one of the most unhappy moments in British history. For hard upon the heels of the set-back at Grenada came Paul Jones's raid, and the invasion of the Channel by the allied fleet. Moreover the intervention of Spain in the war brought a peril not yet enumerated. In June Gibraltar was invested by land and sea; and for the first time since its capture there was no English fleet in the Mediterranean. With

* "Byron's action off Grenada was the most disastrous . . . that the British Navy had encountered since Beachy Head in 1690."—MAHAN.

winter's approach the garrison began to feel the pinching grip of want.

The Government therefore resolved to send Rodney to his station by way of Gibraltar and Minorca. The Channel Fleet could accompany him till the places were relieved; then return to its proper sphere: while Rodney, having relaxed the tension on one side of the Atlantic, could run across with lightning speed and save the situation on the other.

The fulfilment of such a programme must have tried the most robust of men; and Rodney was not robust. Prematurely aged by gout, he was prevented at times from holding a pen or setting foot to the deck. Such handicaps might be reasonably pleaded to extenuate failure. They should not be forgotten in measuring the degree of his success.

The emptiness of the dockyards delayed his start. Christmas came and went; and then the wind grew foul. Lord Sandwich was nearly frantic. "For God's sake go to sea," he wrote. "You cannot conceive of what importance it is to yourself, to me and to the public." Rodney effected his departure just before the New Year. He had twenty-two sail of the line. He had frigates, troop-ships, ordnance vessels and victuallers. He had merchantmen for the Indies and Portugal; at the least 300 sail. His flag was in the *Sandwich* (ninety). Of his captains the most notable was Adam Duncan, one day to win eternal fame at Camperdown.

On 7th January they made Cape Finisterre and sent the merchantmen upon their way. Next morning in the north-east they sighted twenty-two sail. A chase was ordered: and in a few hours' time all the twenty-two had been taken. They were Spaniards sailing from northern ports to supply the fleet blockading the Rock. Sixteen of them were convoy ships carrying stores from Coruña and San Sebastian. The rest were a fighting escort; small ships for the most part, but one of them a sixty-four, the *Guipuscuano*. Nobody could pronounce the name, and Rodney resolved to change it. One of his midshipmen was the King's third son, afterwards William IV, the "Sailor Prince". Rodney, pleased at the compliment His Majesty had paid him in sending the boy to sea with him, now gracefully tendered thanks. Describing his principal capture he wrote, "I have named her the

Prince William in respect of His Royal Highness in whose presence she had the honour to be taken". The *Guipuscuano* had another honour. She escorted to England four of the convoy laden with welcome naval supplies for Lord Sandwich's empty dockyards. The other ships, including twelve packed tight with flour and corn, were absorbed in the grand array that swept onwards to relieve Gibraltar.

This little success, the first of the war, so swift in its execution, so perfect in its completeness, and withal so practical and helpful, put the whole force in good conceit with itself.

In England it was greeted as the beginning of better things.

. . . . . .

The same bad weather that delayed Rodney's start had released Gibraltar from a strict blockade. The Spaniards, sickening of the inhospitable strait with its tiresome currents and fluky airs, had retired to Cadiz. They did so of set purpose. They knew that Gibraltar was not self-supporting. They knew that relief could reach it only from the sea. They knew that British battleships were proving woefully insufficient. From such premises they concluded that during the winter England would try to push through to the Rock a fleet of victuallers. To waylay these they planned an ambuscade off Cape St. Vincent; and selected for their purpose the *Fénix*, a strange creature built of mahogany, with ten seventy-fours and a couple of frigates; the whole under Don Langara, a brave and courteous sailor of the old school. That this force itself ran any risk does not seem to have occurred to them; for they left in Cadiz Bay a reserve of twenty-four sail.

As Rodney worked south he bespoke whatever vessels he passed and in good time learned of the desperadoes lying in wait to destroy him. He sent the glad tidings round his fleet that every man might keep his weather eye open; and he so arranged his ships that, if fortune befriended him, the swiftest might be in the van.

An hour after midday on 16th January when they were now past Cape St. Vincent, Captain Affleck of the *Bedford* sighted the enemy in the south-east. At first Rodney acted with caution. He was not certain of the enemy's number and his first intent was to form the "Line Ahead". But this required time: and for a January day the hour was late. On the other hand he was still uncertain of the enemy's intention. So he ordered the "Line

Abreast". But this contented him no better. The wind was blowing strongly from the west and the Spaniard had set his sails for the east of south. Had he abandoned his ambuscade? Was he running for Cadiz and safety? As he once more surveyed the foe, Rodney, tortured though he was with racks and cramps, suddenly flung discretion to the winds, hauled down his signal for the "Line Abreast," and gave his excited myrmidons the order to chase.

The decision was not that of an old man. At most there were but four hours of daylight and it seemed that before his ships were near enough darkness would certainly have fallen. The pursuit would draw them towards a lee shore fringed with shoals. The wind already brisk might at any moment change to a storm. And his task was to relieve Gibraltar: not hazard the very existence of his fleet in waters unknown to him. The risks were great. He accepted them. There ahead were the Spaniards, and England required a crushing victory. "Fire a gun then; and hoist a Dutch flag at the main topgallant-mast head!"

The signal for the chase was dear to the heart of British tars. Hawke had used it: and Hawke had improved it, teaching his foremost ships to leave the enemy's rear for their slower companions and themselves press on to deal with foes in front. Rodney knew all about the manœuvre; and had added to Hawke's an improvement of his own, that might have been made for the present occasion. "If I place under the Dutch flag a blue pendant, then all ships as they get up are to engage their opponents TO LEEWARD." So the Britons plunged forward, endeavouring not only to overhaul the foe but with deliberate movement to place themselves between him and the shoals.

If Don Langara turned before the wind, no man should call him coward. He had fine ships, but there were only eleven. With a good breeze behind him and a harbour under his lee, it would have been strange if he had stayed. Yet he was unwilling to fly. It was unbecoming in a Spanish grandee. He preferred to take his departure without undue haste and with some semblance of military order. Possibly if he had made all sail without regard to appearance, he might have disappointed the pursuit. But at four o'clock the leaders of the chase were within striking distance; and Langara resolving to sell his life dearly instructed his force to give

as good as they received. They acquitted themselves handsomely: but their pluck could not save them from Rodney's ships. For two years the English had been denied the luxury of a hand-to-hand fight among the tumbling waves. The opportunity had come and they snatched it greedily.

In less than an hour from the first shot the *San Domingo* blew up. She had 600 men on board; and though Rodney's seamen did what they could, they picked up but a single survivor. At six o'clock a sister ship hauled down her colours, the first of the Spaniards to strike. By this time night had dropped upon the sea and with darkness the waves rose higher. But the freshening breeze blew the sky clear of clouds and revealed a brilliant moon. Up over Cadiz she rose almost at the full, pouring upon the battle-field the light which the Britons prayed for. Strange must have been the spectacle: the mighty ships racing before the wind, the white clouds scudding overhead, the silver radiance of the moon upon plunging waves and the red fire spouting through a mist of smoke.

Captain Duncan set all the sail that his *Monarch* could carry, but it was nearly nine before he reached the fray. He made for a little cluster of ships and was soon engaged with three. All fought well: but the *San Augustin* best. She yielded after two hours' fight; but by then the state of the sea made it impossible to launch a boat. The Spanish vessel saw her chance. She waited till a cloud obscured the moon; then rehoisted her flag and escaped.

When the *Sandwich* worked her way into the firing line it was already dusk. Rodney was unable to form any opinion as to the nature of the force before him. It might be the ambuscade; or it might after all be a fleet like that which he had netted at Finisterre. "Master," he said, "this ship is not to pay any attention to merchantmen or small ships of war. Lay me alongside of the biggest ship, the Admiral if there be one." At two o'clock in the morning the *Sandwich* came alongside of the *Monarca*, the foremost ship in the field. The duel that ensued was short and sharp. The men who served Rodney knew what he expected; and for twelve patient hours they had stood by their guns. One broadside: and the *Monarca* surrendered.

Then Don Langara hauled down his stricken flag and brought the fight to an end.

When morning dawned the weather was still wild and several English ships for a time had all they could do to make safe offing. "I may venture to affirm," wrote the Admiral, "that had the weather proved but moderate, or had the action happened in the day, not one of their squadron had escaped." There was little cause to complain. Eleven Spaniards took part in the fight. Four only got away; and if the other three were no better off than the *San Augustin* they were lucky to get away at all. Of the other seven one was blown up; but the *San Julian*, *Princessa*, *Monarca*, *Diligente*, *San Eugenio* and *Fénix* were prizes in Rodney's hand.

The capture of the last named was to Rodney particularly gratifying, for not since Anson's day had it been the good fortune of his countrymen to capture the person of an enemy's Commander-in-Chief.

Rodney met no other difficulties but those of sea and sky, and on 26th January was greeted with fervour by the hard-pressed defenders of Gibraltar. Then, while his provision-ships were unloading, he sent on the *Marlborough*, *Invincible* and *Defence* to carry relief to Minorca. In due time this also was accomplished, and the first part of his commission was complete.

Few campaigns have been blessed in so rich a measure; but sweeter to England than the fruits of conquest was the grand moral effect on her ring of enemies. No victory could have been more opportune. Lord Sandwich cast aside the rôle of condescending patron and wrote for once from his heart: "I scarcely know how to find words to congratulate you upon your glorious success and upon the eminent service you have done your country".

And if the campaign was to Britain of vital consequence, it raised Rodney himself from the honourable status of a distinguished Admiral to an equality with the heroes of the past. In a single month he had swept away all memory of the preceding twelve. For the loss of the *Serapis* he had given his country the two and twenty sail from Finisterre; for the retreat of the Channel Fleet—the relief of Gibraltar and Minorca: for the unhappy engagement off Grenada—the midnight victory off Cape St. Vincent. His progress had been a grand triumphal march. He emerged from it the acknowledged head of the Navy of Britain, the reincarnation of her power upon the sea.

THE BATTLE OF MARTINIQUE

April 17, 1780

The French hopes centred in the West Indies. They had good cause for satisfaction with the events of 1779, and already looked forward to the eventual subjugation of all the islands. Early in 1780 they sent forth a new commander to replace the military D'Estaing. This was Louis Urbain, Comte de Guichen, perhaps the finest product of the new French school. He had fought with distinction under D'Orvilliers and knew as much about maritime warfare as any commander afloat.

Rodney had then a very different task before him when in February he bade farewell to the Channel Fleet and with a skeleton force of four set sail for the west. It was one thing to brush aside an inferior squadron of Spaniards. He had now to prefer skill to skill, and devise a thrust which should break through the careful fence that had foiled his countrymen at Ushant and Grenada. He arrived in the Indies a few days after De Guichen, and on 27th March had the satisfaction of dropping anchor in the waters of St. Lucia, his own particular, self-chosen base. Here he found sixteen ships under Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, who had temporarily taken over the Leewards station on the departure of Byron and Barrington. Sir Hyde, fifth baronet, concealed a heart of gold under a most forbidding exterior. He was sour-faced and crusty; surly of manner, unkind of speech, and very crabbed. "Old Vinegar" the disrespectful called him.

On 2nd April Rodney appeared at Fort Royal and flung down the wager of battle. But for battle as such De Guichen cared little. He was there to establish an empire for France and he needed craft and subtlety. Therefore he ignored Rodney, feigned somnolence and waited for the English ships to go. When they did go, then soft-footed and quickly he slipped out of port, bent upon capturing an island. The war had already brought his country Dominica, St. Vincent and Grenada. It was now the turn of Barbados. He had on board an efficient striking-force, 3000 strong: and these he hoped to convoy safely, beating to eastward through the ocean-gap that separates Dominica from Martinique.

Rodney had raised the blockade. But he had done so of set purpose. He had guessed De Guichen's motives. He had turned away to tempt him out, leaving frigates to warn him when the deer should rise. On 15th April De Guichen broke covert. On the 16th Rodney's fleet sighted him near the Pearl Rock, an islet off Martinique. With a fair start the Frenchman had not succeeded in persuading the Trades to let him pass to windward of the island chain. There was still time. At five o'clock Rodney was able to count his enemies. They were twenty-two of the line. He himself had twenty. As evening fell he issued his orders, clear and brief and prompt. The whole fleet would chase the enemy, forming, as it sailed, in line ahead; and would be careful to retain the windward station between the enemy and his base. The frigates would cruise to leeward of his line, so that the movements of the enemy in the night should not delude him.

In imagination Rodney had fought this battle already time and again. He had quite settled with himself how to win a glorious victory and for this purpose had evolved a novel manœuvre. It was as ingenious as any scheme of "Doubling" or "Dividing": and it seemed to Rodney more efficacious, because it provided a more practicable method of throwing the main strength of his fleet on a fraction only of that opposing him. His idea was to reduce the interval between his separate ships to half or less than half the interval adopted by the enemy. Thus if the enemy had between each ship 400 yards of sea-room, he could by closing his own intervals to 100 yards bring down at least two ships of his own on every one of the foe.

Almost as soon as it was light preparations were afoot and Rodney signalled his intention to execute his new manœuvre. Individual ships were to close up and shorten the intervals that separated them.

It was his intention to mass his contracted array on the rear of the enemy. He chose the rear for an obvious reason. If he attacked the hostile van the French would bring their unoccupied ships to the succour of those engaged. If he attacked the rearmost half of their line, the van would either float off the field or confound confusion by their efforts to return.

Much time was consumed before Rodney was satisfied with the poise of his wings for the final swoop. But at length he judged

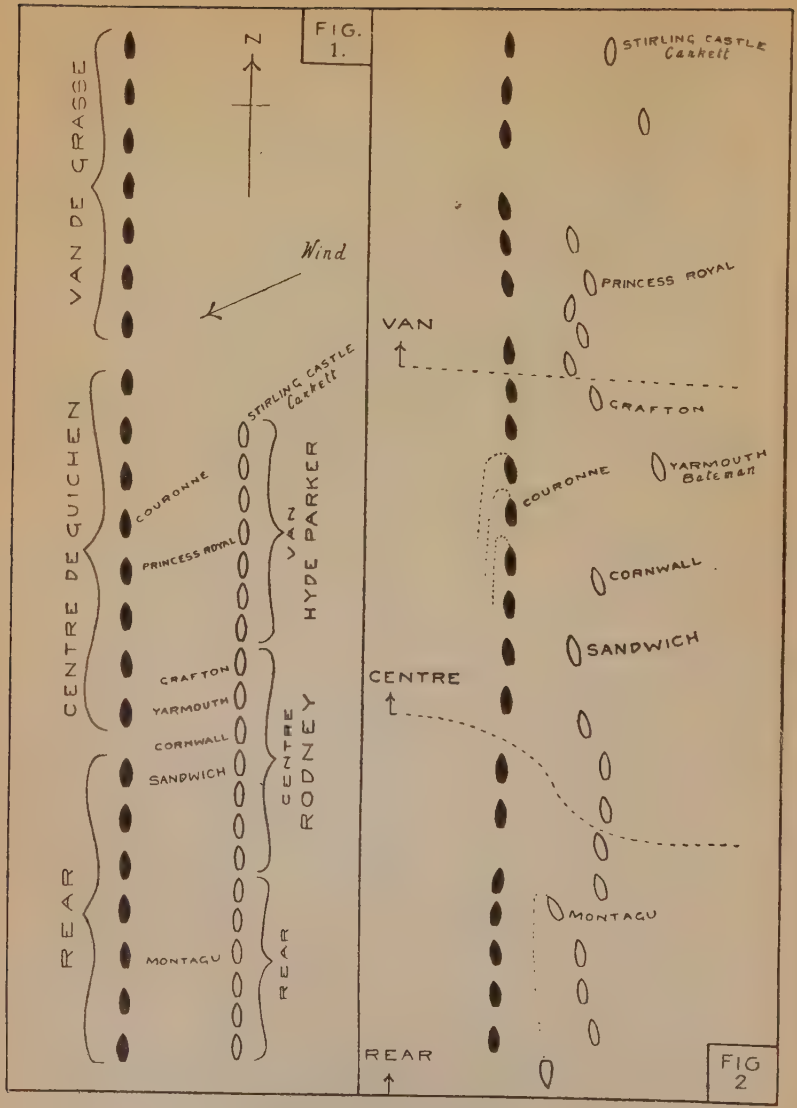
things perfect for his need: and signalled *Additional Fighting Instruction, Number Twenty-One.*

The article in question shall be quoted in full that the reader may weigh it carefully and judge for himself what it means.

If the squadron should be sailing in a line-of-battle-ahead to windward of the enemy and the Commander-in-Chief would have the course altered in order to lead down to them, he will hoist a Union flag at the main top-gallant-mast head and fire a gun. Whereupon every ship in the squadron is to steer for the ship of the enemy, which, from the disposition of the two squadrons, it must be his lot to engage notwithstanding the signal for the Line Ahead will be kept flying; making or shortening sail in such proportion as to preserve the distance assigned by the signal for the line, in order that the whole squadron may, as near as possible, come into action at the same time.

Rodney never questioned the signal's power to convey to his captains the scheme which lay so clearly unfolded in his own mind. The ships were to maintain the existing interval that separated one from another. They were to do so in spite of any seeming contradictions contained in the order for the line. And they were to match themselves with those of the enemy who happened to be stationed over against them. [MAP. FIG. 1.] Had all his captains adopted the same intrepretation he would undoubtedly have been able to hurl his twenty ships on the last fourteen of the French. And with such odds in his favour he could hardly have failed to inflict a crushing defeat. There is a story that, as De Guichen watched the development of the attack, he lost heart and mourned in anticipation the loss of ten ships at least. But the leader of the army who was standing by him on the quarter-deck of the *Couronne* suddenly turned to him with a smile and called out, "Courage, General! The English desert their Commander!"

The cause of the remark was a wild and unexpected movement of the British van by which Rodney's hopes were blighted and the fair fabric of his stratagem shattered. The leader of the van was the *Stirling Castle.* Her captain was Robert Carkett, who twenty years earlier had humbled the mighty *Foudroyant* in the little *Monmouth* sixty-four. His name was great and his courage proverbial.



THE BATTLE OF MARTINIQUE

April 17, 1780

But the present occasion called not so much for courage as a correct interpretation of *Article XXI.* So far as Carkett's knowledge and experience of battles went, it was customary before a beginning was made for a fleet to be drawn up in a line that was not only parallel to the enemy's but conterminous with it; so that van might deal with van, centre with centre and rear with rear. [*Article XIX.*] In the year that he gained his lieutenancy Admiral Mathews had been cashiered for failure so to arrange his forces, and Captain Carkett had not forgotten. To him the word "opposite" did not mean "that which is over against one," but "that which under ordinary circumstances OUGHT to be over against one"; not in fact the nearest ship upon the battle-field but the corresponding ship in the enemies' line. As leader of the van his course seemed obvious, and he made all speed to overtake the leading ship of the French.

The blame for this terrible mistake must not be fastened upon Carkett's shoulders, as if he alone were responsible. The *Stirling Castle* was but a unit in the squadron of Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, who was of course at liberty to rectify the misconstrued zeal of his subordinate and hoist a signal in the *Princess Royal* that should recall his leader to her duty. But Sir Hyde saw nothing incorrect in the behaviour of the *Stirling Castle.* On the contrary he followed under a press of canvas and carried his entire squadron with him. Those who brought up the rear of the division began, it is true, to have qualms: but they were bound of course to follow Sir Hyde; and follow him they did. Worse still. Their example communicated itself to the division of Rodney himself, and the *Grafton* hastened to join in the demoralizing wild-goose chase. And now the undue length of the French array which had looked like their undoing actually told in their favour: for Carkett's attack on their extreme left wing prevented a concentration on their right. [MAP. FIG. 2.] What wonder that the frigate captains who saw the game better than any of the participants, wept tears of disappointment at the egregious folly that was spoiling Rodney's plan!

In the wake of the *Grafton* came the *Yarmouth.* Her captain was Nathaniel Bateman, a hard-headed old man and the toughest of fighters. At the battle of Toulon he had been an able seaman, and for the skill displayed by him on that occasion had been put

upon the quarter-deck. His courage was as unimpeachable as Carkett's. But he was now on the horns of a dilemma. Ahead of him went his comrades, each for the corresponding number in the enemy's line. His ship was number "nine," and he at first supposed that he would be doing right if he made for number "nine" of the enemy. But then the ship astern of him, the *Cornwall*,—what was she doing? Well, the *Cornwall* being the ship next ahead of the Commander-in-Chief was of course acting as a second should. She was standing by him. Here then was a problem. Was Captain Bateman to believe that Admiral Sir Hyde Parker and no less than seven captains had gone completely off their heads? Clearly not. And yet if he followed them, what a space would be left between him and Sir George! What in the world was he to do! He clapped on sail; made a certain amount of headway; liked not the look of things; hesitated; and pulled the *Yarmouth* up. Then in the sight of all men he did what no brave man can afford to do in the middle of a battle. He lay to doing nothing.

All this was gall and wormwood to Rodney. To say that he was angry is to speak euphemistically. He was too good an Admiral and too proud of his own scheme to allow righteous wrath to interfere with guidance, had guidance been possible. Unfortunately there were no remedial signals that would allow a Commander-in-Chief to check an unexpected move or correct the faulty impressions of subordinates. He might hoist a flag half blue and half white at the fore top-gallant-mast head, as a signal that the whole fleet should engage the enemy more closely. [*Additional Instruction XIX.*] He might hoist the distinguishing pendant of the luckless *Yarmouth* and summon her at once to take her place in the line. He did all this. He even went the length of firing at the *Yarmouth*, calling shame on her apostasy. But he could do nothing more except by personal example. So in rage he flung himself upon his enemies to work off the fever of his wrongs.

The manner in which he fought the *Sandwich* was a revelation of skill. Assailing the French line to rearward of De Guichen he singled out an antagonist and flung her headlong from her place. A second ship tried vainly to parry his blows, and a third did not wait to receive them. Thus he cleared a space about him.

But the ring closed up again. De Guichen, released by the

absence of the *Yarmouth*, put his ship about and came along on the larboard tack with his seconds ahead and astern. Three fine ships they were: the *Couronne*, *Triomphant* and *Fendant*, two eighties and a seventy-four. And Rodney fought them all; fought them alone. For an hour and a half he fought them and still he fought them alone. It is true that his fore top-mast was carried away, that his main mast and mizen were shot through, that his main spar dangled useless like a broken limb, that his sails were riddled with gaping holes and his rigging tattered and torn, that blocks and spars and broken chain fell like thunderbolts from above. But he fought those three ships to a standstill. He pounded them with solid shot, he plied them with grape, he peppered them with canister. The guns were heated almost to bursting point. They leapt upwards on the recoil like crazy things. The breechings were strained and the handspikes broken. Muzzles were torn from the cannon-mouth, and men dropped beside their guns exhausted by the toil. Every two minutes 800 pounds of powder were spent and eighty rounds of shot. And still the *Sandwich* fought on; with gundecks a reeking pit of smoke, a suffocating slaughter-house of ghastly smells and ghastlier groans. Still she fought on, and still the gunners hauled on the gun-tackle, and the livid red spurted from the vent and the shot screeched from the muzzle on its errand of murder and death.*

At four o'clock the *Couronne* and her consorts had had enough. De Guichen hoisted the signal to wear and carried his whole fleet away before the wind. During the crisis of the battle Rodney had done the work of a complete division of the fleet.

It is not perhaps to be wondered at that for the next twenty-four hours the *Sandwich* could barely be persuaded to float.

Who won the battle of Martinique? There are French writers who claim a victory for De Guichen because he fought as long as he desired and withdrew entirely at his leisure. In actual number of dead and wounded the French suffered more: and against this may be set the greater damage wrought by them upon British masts and sails. But when the decision rests upon such techni-

* Throughout the struggle a woman served one of the 24-pounders on board the *Sandwich*. She received no wound and spent the night ministering to the sick. Rodney next day called for her, terrified her with a reprimand, then thanked her warmly and gave her £10.

calities as these, it is time to turn from the clash of arms and babble of words to the direct and immediate issue. The issue was Barbados. De Guichen became the challenger the moment he resolved to take the island in defiance of the British sea-force in the neighbourhood. He was no more able to think further of taking Barbados after the battle of Martinique than he was of capturing Ireland.

The news of the battle was received with rapture at home. "Every time we hear from you, we receive fresh cause to approve your conduct," wrote Lord Sandwich. "If you go on in the same style, you will oblige me to study how to write panegyric which, till of late, I have had little occasion to practise." The thanks of both Houses were voted in a very cordial manner, and the Commons tacked on to theirs a comfortable pension of £2000 a year. Not the least agreeable token was a letter from the chivalrous De Guichen, who could not allow the occasion to pass without expressing his admiration for so subtle a snare, and without confessing that it was through no merit of his own that he had not fallen into it.

But flattery could not mollify the Admiral; neither gifts, nor soft speech. He had cause for vexation. His cherished masterpiece had been spoiled by what he considered crass stupidity. He was careful to avoid bickerings and recrimination, deeming such responsible for the demoralized state of the Navy. But he could not allow the occurrence to pass without reproof. Therefore in his dispatch he wrote: "The French Admiral, who appeared to me to be a brave and gallant officer, had the honour to be nobly supported during the whole action;" and then in sorrowful contrast: "It is with concern inexpressible, mixed with indignation, that the duty I owe my Sovereign and my country obliges me to acquaint your lordships that—the British flag was not properly supported".

The last sentence, Lord Sandwich thought, said too little or too much. He suppressed it: and required from Rodney a list of those who had done their duty. This list he published: and in doing so tacitly censured all those whose names did not appear. This at least was Carkett's view, and deeming his honour at stake he appealed to the Admiral for the privilege of trial by court-martial. Then Rodney's wrath exploded. He turned and rent

the unhappy captain. In a letter, tingling with indignation, he proceeded to show what his plan had been and how it had been ruined by the man of all others whom he had reason to believe would understand what the service of his country demanded. With words that must have cut deep he fastened the blame securely, upbraiding to the last a negligence "which nothing but the former service you had done your King and Country and my firm belief of your being a brave man, could have induced me, as commander of a great fleet, to overlook".*

There was a sadder case than Captain Carkett's. Captain Carkett may have fought in the wrong way. Captain Bateman had not fought at all: not, at least, till the worst was over and the issue no longer in doubt. Captain Carkett's fault had been an injury to the Commander-in-Chief. Captain Bateman's was a crime against his country and his King. At the first possible moment Rodney arrested him, appointed a court martial, and broke the wretched man without compunction.

He also called the *Montagu* to account for her singular behaviour in the fight. [MAP. FIG. 2.] It was shown however that she was so roughly handled in running down as to be totally unable to come to the wind on the starboard tack. She had wore, therefore, engaged five of the enemy, and to avoid capture worked her way out of the firing line. She was honourably acquitted.

. . . . . .

The battle over, Rodney put himself in front of Fort Royal to prevent the French from reaching home. De Guichen patched himself at Guadeloupe, and then kept to eastward of the islands, hugging the wind. By so doing he could decline battle, until he found a chance of slipping into safety. He was discovered on 10th May, and for eleven days the fleets remained in sight of each other. By dint of hard struggling Rodney on two occasions brought about partial engagements, but these would not call for remark, were it not for the use to which Rodney put them.

* It is inconceivable that the "van" would have behaved as it did, if it had really understood what was intended: and if it did not understand, then blame could not justifiably be attached to it. This argument presented itself to Rodney in his cooler moments and with an eye to the future he swelled the bulk of the *Additional Fighting Instructions* by a new article; advising ships that did "not understand" to hoist at the main a Dutch Jack so that instructions could be supplemented.

"As I had given public notice," he writes to Lady Rodney, "that I should hoist my flag on board one of my frigates and that I expected implicit obedience to every signal made, under the certain penalty of being instantly superseded, it had an admirable effect, as they were all convinced, after their late gross behaviour, that they had nothing to expect at my hands but instant punishment to those who neglected their duty. My eye on them had more dread than the enemy's fire and they knew it would be fatal. No regard was paid to rank—admirals as well as captains if out of their station were instantly reprimanded by signals or messages sent by frigates: and in spite of themselves, I taught them to be, what they had never been before—OFFICERS."

This is a terrible picture of himself that Rodney draws; scowling, implacable and thunder-browed. It has more than once been compared with the gentler methods of Nelson. The contrast is picturesque; but it should be remembered that Nelson's loving tuition was offered to those who had already been trained in the severe school of Lord St. Vincent.

On 21st May it was reported to the Admiral that two of his ships were sinking and a third unmanageable. The squadron was worn out by overwork. With much regret Rodney turned away. To allow De Guichen to pass was a disappointment, but to lose three ships a national calamity.

July with its promise of hurricanes sent both fleets in search of safer waters. De Guichen returned to Europe. Rodney did not. He collected all the merchantmen that were ready for home; and to conduct them he singled out all the officers that were least of service to himself. The reasons for the selection did not appear; and it is easy to believe that Sir Hyde Parker was glad enough to go. It is said that he almost choked with rage every time he allowed his mind to dwell on the indignities he had been compelled to suffer.

After taking this precaution Rodney himself disappeared. He gave no notice to a soul. He even eluded his own frigates. English and French alike were left to their own surmises.

On 14th September with fourteen of the line he arrived at Sandy Hook. He was but carrying out the suggestion he had made in his famous "Memorandum".

His arrival was a source of deep vexation to Washington who

saw as clearly as the Admiral that the issue of the conflict between Great Britain and her colonies lay in the control of the eastern seaboard of North America; that there and there only could the final and decisive battle be fought. If no Navy could be procured for his country, Washington was convinced that his own endeavours ashore were mere waste of time; that the ultimate victory would go by default to Britain. For long he had striven to lure the French away from West Indian honey-pots. D'Estaing had turned a deaf ear to him; from De Guichen he had hoped for better things. And instead came Admiral Rodney.

It was most exasperating.

THE CRISIS OF 1781

CHAPTER I. WAR WITH HOLLAND

Samuel Hood, one of the brightest ornaments of British naval history, was born in 1724 at Butleigh in Somerset. His father was vicar of the parish, with no connexions in the Navy and little influence beyond the village boundaries. But one day an accident happened. Admiral Smith, better known as "Tom of Ten Thousand," was passing through Butleigh, when his post-chaise broke down and left him stranded. The inn was small and dark and dingy: and the vicar, hearing of the traveller's plight, put him up at the vicarage. In return for this kindness the sailor offered to provide for both the vicar's sons if they cared to enter the Navy. The offer was accepted somewhat hesitatingly. There would have been more readiness perhaps, could the vicar have foreseen that both boys would live to be Admirals and enter the house of Peers.

Samuel became a "Captain's Servant" at the age of seventeen, and five years later obtained a commission. He received post-rank during the Seven Years' War and in 1759 formed one of the fleet that served under Rodney at Havre. When the American War broke out he was made Commissioner of Portsmouth Dockyard and at the visit of George III received the honour of a baronetcy. But up to this point his career had been humdrum, and offered small hope of eventual distinction. His chance came when Hyde Parker returned to England after the battle of Martinique. The Government wanted a successor and chose him:

not for his service reputation, but because they knew that Rodney liked him and would welcome his appointment. The two old friends joined hands at St. Lucia in January, 1781.

England had just added to her enemies by declaring war on the Dutch. The Dutch had provoked her. They had joined the Armed Neutrality. They had done so in defiance of treaty obligations. They had shielded Paul Jones after his capture of the *Serapis*. They were known to sympathize with the French. They were detected in an intrigue with the Americans. But all their evil deeds faded into nothingness beside the crimes of St. Eustatius. St. Eustatius is a tiny isle that lies just north of Nevis and St. Kitts. Here the Dutch had long had a trading depot, a port of call for their transatlantic carriers. The war gave it a new and instantaneous value. It became the sole West Indian bourse, the only spot between Florida and Trinidad where any trade was done. Thither came the merchants of Boston and Savannah seeking an outlet for commercial channels which the war had choked. Thither came the enemies of England, eager for stores which they could not with comfort bring from home. Thither also came the ships that Rodney had battered, to find equipment in a port which the Britons dared not touch. Magazines, stores and warehouses sprang up like mushrooms in a single night. The whole island became one single emporium, a coffer filled with illicit wealth, a garner and hoard of limitless supplies.

Had the Dutch been logical, had they been as willing to sell to England the balls and powder which as "fruit" and "grain" they dispensed to her enemies, vengeance might have come with slower foot. But in trying to make their fortune they tried to ruin England too.

On 27th January Rodney received instructions to do the Dutch all the mischief in his power. On 3rd February he dropped anchor off St. Eustatius and gave the governor one hour before bombardment. The island was in no position to defend itself. It had not a single fort. It could not cope with twenty-one ships. It surrendered at discretion. Within the harbour Rodney found 120 merchantmen. Thirty had left for Europe just before his arrival. He chased and hauled them back. In addition there were six small men-of-war and one sail of the line. Then there were naval stores of every kind which the Admiral removed to Antigua:

and there were 2000 American prisoners. All the magazines and warehouses were crammed to overflowing. The wharves were thronged with merchandise. Even the beach was littered with cases of sugar and tobacco. And daily fresh argosies kept coming from Boston and Amsterdam. The plunder in all was valued at more than £3,000,000.

The rapidity of Rodney's movements and the full measure of his success confirmed at home the opinion already formed of him. All men desired to do him honour and vowed the Dutch were properly served. The Admiral was in his absence elected to Parliament with acclamation: and the King conferred on him the Order of the Bath and caused a handsome medal to be struck.

Rodney proposed next to proceed against Guiana and Curaçoa, other possessions of the Dutch. But he was suddenly compelled to modify his plans. Tidings reached him that the French were equipping a new West Indian fleet. According to good authorities it comprised no more than ten of the line: and from official quarters there was no confirmation of the news. But there were still four battleships at Martinique and if they were joined by other ten the total force would by no means be negligible. Rodney therefore sent Hood to blockade Fort Royal with eighteen of his twenty-one ships. He already trusted his "second" as he trusted his own right hand, and this delegation of a fighting fleet to one who had not yet commanded at sea was a very notable honour. He himself at St. Eustatius was still as busy as he could be. The vast accumulation of wealth in kind to be converted into money before it could be removed, the multitude of suitors who claimed immunity or clamoured for partial exemption, the unparalleled opportunities for fraud among dishonest folk who especially in war-time smell out the booty from afar, all these and a thousand other claims upon his time kept him employed every minute of the day. To add to his trials, his old enemy the gout returned, and the doctors told him that his condition was complicated by an internal malady which needed an instant operation in London. He ventured to ask Lord Sandwich for a holiday. "I flatter myself," the First Lord replied, "that you will not avail yourself of your permission to leave your command in the present critical state of affairs. I do not wish to see you till you have completed the great work you have so successfully begun." After

this there was nothing left but to endure while endurance was possible.

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It was on 28th April that the unexpected happened. Rodney was still wrestling with account-books, and Hood was still watching Martinique. The season was nearing an end, and both had long since abandoned their belief in the small French force of ten. But on 28th April round the southern end of Martinique appeared Admiral the Comte de Grasse with twenty-one sail of the line!

Hood was taken by surprise and outnumbered. He had not a single advantage but his leeward position. He could retire if he chose; and if he had done so, none could have blamed him. But he did not retire. Adroit and self-possessed he manipulated his line as if he had fought fleet actions annually for years past. As the French came through the island chain in line abreast to shield their convoy, he cunningly tried to steal the wind from them. As they turned north to Port Royal in line ahead he raced them for the harbour. As they made to enter it he tacked and threatened their rear. They put about on a similar tack and were joined by the four from the anchorage. He was now outnumbered by three to two. Yet he coolly shortened canvas and lay to under topsails, hoping the wind would bring his enemies down to him.

All through the 29th and on the following day he struggled to bring the French to close action. But with twenty-five ships they had now a fleet more numerous than his own and Rodney's in conjunction. This for the moment was all they required. De Grasse had gained an undeniable advantage, and the constancy of the wind allowed him to keep it.

At first sight it seems difficult to absolve from blame the Government at home. They were certainly responsible for the contretemps. But with the Dutch in arms at their door, and Gibraltar crying loudly for relief, it was quite impossible in 1781 either to strengthen Rodney's hand or prevent De Grasse's ships from setting out.* They did what they could. They sent a warning by

* The Dutch lay on England's trade route to the Baltic whence she obtained her naval supplies. Lord Sandwich gave the North Sea command to Sir Hyde Parker, the rejected of Rodney. Parker's fleet was the worst found of

their fastest cruiser. She started a week before the end of March. She made the best of her pace. She arrived on 17th May. But De Grasse with his cumbrous fleet, his twenty-one battleships, and his 200 head of convoy started at the same time and arrived on 28th April. The tortoise beat the hare by three weeks.

When Hood rejoined him with the news Rodney for once was puzzled. How could he frustrate De Grasse's plot when he did not know what it was! There were three British islands south of Fort Royal, Barbados, St. Lucia and Tobago. Which was he after? St. Lucia was the best, but strongly armed. Barbados came next and Barbados had been threatened in the previous year.

Rodney sailed to Barbados.

the war. The ships were taken straight from the Motherbank scrap-heap. Parker escorted the Baltic trade and met the Dutch off the Dogger Bank. He was determined to set himself right with the world after Rodney's animadversions. They informed him that he was outnumbered. "If they are fifty," be said, giving his breeches a hitch, "yet will I fight them": and he ordered the convoy to run. The fight itself was a revival of those hand-to-hand struggles between Tromp the younger and Spragge. Both sides blazed away at a distance where to miss was impossible; and, amid a scarlet carnage, hacked and slashed and mangled each other with unyielding valour. The battle began before nine of an August morning and by noon the antagonists had fought each other to a standstill. The casualties were heavier with fourteen ships than at Martinique with sixty. As if by mutual consent they drifted apart. One of the Dutch ships never reached home. She sank on the way. It is a marvel that all the British did not follow her example, for the shot tore through their aged beams, as if they had been made of acacia or almug trees.

The British claimed the victory. It is difficult to say on what grounds; perhaps because the *Hollandia* was drowned. The casualties were equal on both sides. No captures were made. Parker obstinately vowed that if Zoutman had stayed he himself was game for another round,—or two. But then Sir Hyde did not himself claim the victory. He came home in a furious passion, ready to tear Lord Sandwich in shreds for sending him to sea with such shabby contemptible ships. The King was anxious to appease him, and went down to review his fleet in the Thames: spoke of rewards: Parker would have none of them: besought the old man to forgive the Ministers and continue to command the fleet. But Parker lifted up his great bull-dog face and with an angry puckering of his mouth and little courtesy, snarled, "I wish your Majesty better ships and younger officers".

Sir Hyde was subsequently given command of the East India station. He sailed in the *Cato* and was never heard of again. Some say he was lost in mid-ocean: others that he was wrecked on the Malabar coast and done to death by the natives.

He found the island unmolested: hastened on to Tobago and arrived there on 4th June. He was too late!

De Grasse had arrived on 31st May, and received the submission of the place (the fourth British island to fall). He had landed there a stout garrison brought from Europe for the purpose: and having thus as he thought avenged his countrymen's repulse at Martinique he stood away to Cap François to pick up the merchant traffic before seeking shelter from the hurricanes.

Rodney's health now broke down altogether. He therefore instructed Hood to carry the fleet to North America, and himself set sail for home. It might well be supposed that after all he had done Rodney would have been welcomed with boundless admiration and esteem. He was kindly received by the King. And a great concourse of people waited outside his house in Albemarle Street and strewed the way with flowers. But already the breath of slander had whispered evil of him, and after fighting De Guichen and De Langara, he now found himself opposed by Edmund Burke. It is well understood to-day that Burke believed himself to be championing the cause of the oppressed or exposing the wickedness of those in high places, when he was really lending his incomparable talents to the temporary needs of a political party. At a time when Britain was matched against the world, two men kept a bold front to the foe and the flag of their country unfurled. Both men were assailed by Burke with a fierce denunciation that proved them double-dyed villains. It should therefore be remembered that Rodney's assailant was the same that with all the force of his eloquence impugned the Indian tyranny of Hastings.

It was unfortunate that there were in St. Eustatius certain British citizens. It is difficult to say what their rights exactly were or how they were injured by Rodney. But they gained the ear of Burke and he worked himself into a fever over the whole of the recent campaign. The Dutch, he said, had been vilely treated. They had been summoned to surrender. They had done so. Did they for their acquiescence receive consideration? Far from it. What then was left for the guilty, if the innocent were robbed and pillaged? But it was too evident. The Admiral had been demoralized by the sight of so much gold and given way to the viler passions. But more than this. He had been blinded to his

sense of duty. The French were sending out twenty-five ships. What did he do? Did he go to meet them? Incredible as it might seem, he did not. He put the burden on his second-in-command while he himself stayed gloating over his money-bags. Shame! Shame! Was this an Englishman! Admiral Hood had been placed, not where strategic needs demanded, but where he could prevent anyone from interfering with the Commander-in-Chief as he bowed before his image of gold. And what was the result? Admiral Hood with the British fleet had been defeated by the French, and Tobago had been lost to the Empire.

It would seem almost an insult to Rodney's memory to reply to such a charge: yet such a charge in the hands of Burke was a deadly instrument. Happily the Admiral was soon by fresh claims on the gratitude of his country restored to the highest pinnacle of fame. But in two respects the results of Burke's rhetoric were lasting. He so far identified his own party with his own opinions that it was quite impossible for the Whigs to countenance Rodney's further employment, when at last they turned North and Sandwich out of office. Moreover so effective were his pleas for the long-suffering British residents of St. Eustatius (who were probably dabbling in illicit trade) that for the rest of his life Rodney was perpetually being called upon to refund the losses of suspicious citizens or defray the expense of interminable lawsuits.*

CHAPTER II. THE BATTLE OF THE CHESAPEAKE

September 5, 1781

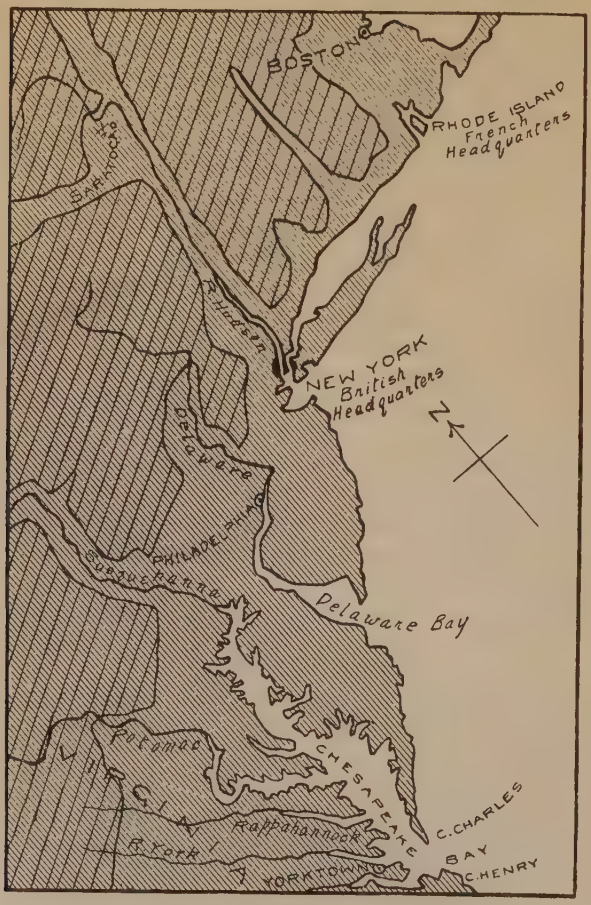
When Rodney sailed for home, no man could foresee that he was leaving America at the very moment when his presence was most needful. Yet such was the case.

The crisis had come.

It has been seen that Washington despaired of his cause unless he could obtain a fleet to dispute with Britain the command of the sea. The urgency of his prayers induced the French to send him in 1780 a squadron of eight ships, for which he found ac-

* The money taken at St. Eustatius was sent home by Rodney to the King. It never reached its destination. Britain's main fleet was too weak to ensure the safety of all her commerce; and the French snapped up the treasure ships in the mouth of the English Channel.

commodation at Rhode Island. [Map.] But these alone were no use. There were as many British at New York. What Washington wanted was the grand fleet that had conquered Dominica,



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE CAMPAIGN OF CHESAPEAKE BAY, 1781

St. Vincent, Grenada and Tobago. This in co-operation with his army, he thought, would render the British hold on North America as insecure as their failing grasp on the Indies.

The British Commander-in-Chief at New York, General Clinton, struggled meanwhile without ceasing to bring the "rebels" to their knees. As long as the fleet was unchallenged he could set the army ashore wherever he willed. By way of diversion he detached General Lord Cornwallis to conduct a campaign in Virginia. Of the total British force of 15,000 Cornwallis took rather more than half. He achieved a considerable measure of success: and although it was understood that he might be obliged to fall back on the coast to draw supplies from the fleet, yet at the date of Rodney's departure he was still keeping busy 6000 colonials under the Frenchman Lafayette.

The absence of Cornwallis suggested to Washington a scheme of reprisal that might induce the main French fleet to come and lend a hand. This was nothing less than an assault on New York by land and sea. If successful it would stagger the British prestige: and in any case it would sensibly relieve the pressure in Virginia. There were but half a dozen English ships at New York and 7000 troops. If the eight French vessels at Rhode Island were joined by twice that number from the Indies, nothing would be easier than to blockade the British six at New York, or force the entrance to Sandy Hook and sink them at their moorings. Meanwhile the 4000 troops cantoned at Rhode Island could unite with his own 12,000, and on the land side outnumber Clinton by more than two to one. The whole scheme was so attractive and seemed so feasible that he sent a flying message to De Grasse unfolding his scheme and imploring assistance.

De Grasse received the message at Cap François whither he had repaired after the capture of Tobago. He was already minded to follow the English to the north. With speed and promptitude he collected a large sum of money to finance his undertaking; and in order to strengthen Washington's position, he raised in the French and Spanish colonies a force of soldiers numbering no less than 4000 men. But far more important than this: on his own responsibility he counter-ordered all the home-returning convoys; postponed their departure indefinitely, and was thus enabled to carry northwards his entire fighting fleet of twenty-eight sail. Rodney working on reliable information reckoned that no more than ten could be spared. This was a careful estimate and

the additional eighteen constitute for De Grasse a high claim to the gratitude of Americans.

Meanwhile Clinton guessed that there was mischief afoot, and sent instant orders to Virginia for the return of 3000 troops. This reduced Cornwallis's force to 5000 men, but augmented his own to a respectable figure even against the concentration of Washington. Cornwallis sent word that his soldiers were weary; and was instructed to fall back on Yorktown and entrench himself there till the clouds were passed and New York no longer in peril. The fleet in Sandy Hook was at this time commanded by Admiral Thomas Graves, a brave Irishman and excellent seaman. Graves was in a very uncomfortable position and hardly knew what to do. If rumour were true, if an attack on New York were certain, and the French fleet coming from the Indies, what was his best plan? If he stayed at New York, he would undoubtedly leave the way open to the junction of the two French fleets; whereas if he blockaded Rhode Island and so secured the smaller squadron, he left New York entirely exposed to the larger. On the whole he preferred to stay where he was: but he stationed a couple of frigates at the mouth of the Chesapeake to give him early notice of the French approach.

A position that was tense and agitating certainly looked a world more cheerful when on 28th August Admiral Sir Samuel Hood arrived at Sandy Hook with fourteen battleships. He confirmed the news of De Grasse's approach, and at the same time was justifiably proud that he had won the race and arrived before him. He had made the continent in the latitude of the Capes of Virginia and then coasted northward. He had spoken Graves's frigates in the Chesapeake; but neither they nor he had caught a glimpse of De Grasse. Graves still thought the best plan would be to protect New York. Hood thought otherwise. He desired to meet the foe halfway. Graves was the senior officer and took supreme command; but he did not insist on the correctness of his own view, and when news was brought that the smaller French fleet had left Rhode Island for the south, he determined if possible to prevent their union with the squadron under De Grasse: this on the last day of August, 1781.

On 5th September with nineteen ships he came in view of the Chesapeake. The lookout reported many sail: but their num-

ber did not surprise him. He took them to be the Rhode Island ships with a convoy in company.

Chesapeake Bay is a vast arm of the sea, fiord in character.* It receives and in turn disgorges the water of many rivers, chief among them the Susquehanna, the Potomac, the Rappahannock, the James and the York. On the last-named stood Yorktown where Cornwallis lay entrenched. The mouth of the Chesapeake is not more than ten miles across. It is defined by the Capes of Virginia, Cape Charles on the north and Cape Henry on the south. The entrance runs alongside of the southern cape. Here there is deep water three miles in width. Northward come the shoals.

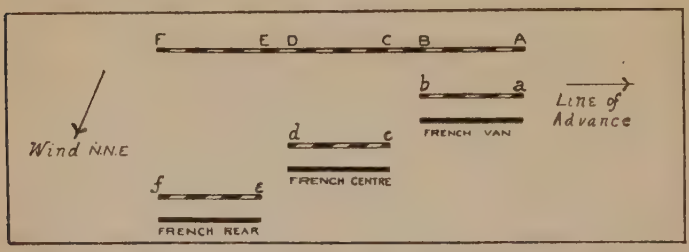
When in the early morning Graves gave the word to approach, he had not so much as a suspicion that De Grasse was in the neighbourhood. In the neighbourhood! He had been at anchor in the Chesapeake for seven days or more. Now he was doing his best to put to sea. The north-easterly wind was foul for him; the tide was making; and there was Cape Henry to be weathered. All these contingencies, taken in connexion with the startling suddenness of the English arrival, handicapped him. But at noon the tide began to ebb, and he filled and worked his way seaward on the port tack. As he did so the British came westward on the opposite tack, but at an interval which precluded them from engaging him as they passed. To bring on an action it was necessary for them to change the direction of sailing; and as in any event the shoals ahead threatened danger, Graves gave early orders for the fleet to wear together.

Their position in the wind enabled the Britons to begin the battle whenever they chose. There was good reason for beginning without the loss of a moment; for the efforts of the French to leave their anchorage had played havoc with their line. They were not in tumultuous confusion: but their centre was well to leeward of their van, and their rear to leeward of their centre.

Graves had then an initial advantage. But how was he to make use of it? What plan should he adopt? The normal method of engaging was obviously out of place; for it presupposed that the enemy were symmetrically aligned. The ever-popular

* Chesapeake, which gives its name to the inlet, is 200 miles from the mouth.

"General Chase" had even less to recommend it; for the enemy had more than twenty battleships and were not attempting to run away. Graves had before him the lesson of Grenada to check undue temerity: and yet to wait until the foe were ready would be to throw away the advantage offered by their evident disorder. The wisest plan, as it seemed to him, was to divide his fleet into its three component squadrons; and launch them, each in good order, on the disintegrated foe. His own division, the centre, would have to advance more quickly than the van: and Hood would have to bring up the rear under every stitch of canvas if the impact of all the squadrons was to be delivered simultaneously. This he thought might well be done. [DIAGRAM: A B C D E F to *ab*, *cd*, *ef*.] But the evolution had never been worked out in practice, and there was no signal for it. How then was he to indicate his intention to the fleet?

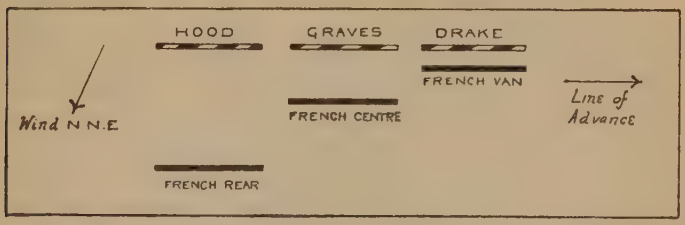


In an ordinary every-day battle the Commander-in-Chief before engaging arranged his fleet parallel to the foe and co-extensive, by the signal for the "Line Ahead". When all was ready he hauled this down, and hoisted the signal for battle. Surely then, thought Graves, if he hoisted BOTH signals, they would supply his present need; the one suggesting the hand-to-hand struggle, the other insisting on careful adjustment, van to van, centre to centre, rear to rear.

Unhappily for England they did nothing of the sort. They suggested something entirely different; and left Graves as powerless to make his real wishes known as Rodney at Martinique. The van under Admiral Drake* and the leading half of Graves's own division engaged the enemy hotly. But all astern of the

* A descendant of the great Sir Francis and a worthy upholder of the name.

flagship seeing the " Line Ahead " signal flying dared not disturb the symmetry of their order. They pushed on in regular Indian file, supposing that Graves meant to use them all against the exposed right wing of the French.* They were too far from their corresponding numbers in the enemy's line even for long-range fire : and did not in consequence manage to get into action at all. [DIAGRAM.]



Thus instead of a decisive battle, there was an indeterminate skirmish. The French van fired to dismast : and, satisfied when they had winged their foe, fell away in haste to leeward. There they received the support of their centre : and so for a time the action halted.

For the British fresh opportunity to renew the struggle did not present itself, although for days they remained on the battlefield. The French, little damaged above-board, robbed them of the weather-gauge and kept a respectful distance. They had come forth not to fight to the death, but to secure a junction with the Rhode Island ships. When these arrived on 10th September, five days after the battle, their immediate purpose was accomplished and they returned to Chesapeake Bay.

Such being the position of affairs, two courses lay before Admiral Graves. To force his way into De Grasse's anchorage would have been to take a strong line indeed. It would not be impossible to supply precedents, Blake's lightning-flash at Santa Cruz and Rooke's encounter in Vigo Bay. But if Graves may be forgiven for unwillingness to compare himself to Blake, it must be admitted also that De Grasse was certainly not trembling like Châteaurenault behind a barricade. From the point of comparative strength there was much to be said against the attempt. Some of the ships that

* As Albemarle had done in the " Four Days' Battle," 1666.

had come from the Indies were almost past praying for. The *Terrible* after the recent action found life intolerable and declined to float. Graves was compelled to burn her. This reduced his force to eighteen and the French had thirty-six in good condition! Besides there was another alternative. Graves had the following facts to bear in mind. There were at New York other of his ships which had not been ready when he himself set out. Reinforcements too were expected from home: and last but not least, New York was the object of De Grasse's enterprise. In the unsatisfactory condition of his ships Graves concluded that he would be better able to repel the French from New York than eject them from the Chesapeake. Of course if some great issue had been hanging in the balance Graves might have adopted the more heroic plan: but to his knowledge there was no other crisis than the peril of New York. There was Cornwallis at Yorktown. But it was unlikely that De Grasse would waste his time when his services were elsewhere awaited: and if he did, he was unlikely to achieve anything with a squadron of ships against a land force fully equipped; unless (and this was unthinkable) he had brought with him an army of his own.

The arguments which helped Admiral Graves to make up his mind had no weight with Admiral Hood. He was asked his opinion and gave it freely. "Force your way into the Chesapeake," he said, "and turn the Frenchmen out."

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On 17th September Graves dropped anchor at Sandy Hook.

The battle of Chesapeake Bay, judged by such standards as Portland, La Hogue, the Finisterres and Lagos, seems in itself but a tame affair. Yet it is doubtful whether any more decisive battle was ever fought on land or sea. Not since the Armada certainly had English vessels participated in a struggle that bore in its train consequences so momentous and world-embracing. It was not the Declaration of Independence that called the United States into being. It was not the French alliance or Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga. It was the battle of Chesapeake Bay that decided the main issue of the war, that crowned the work of Washington, and shattered to fragments the glorious dream of North America under one crown.

To understand this it will be necessary to go behind the scenes and learn the secret that was so cleverly kept from the knowledge and comprehension of Graves.

When De Grasse came north he made his own conditions. With unmistakable emphasis he refused to take any part in the proposed attack on New York. History supplied no example of a Frenchman's entering a harbour full of English ships and destroying or sinking them all. Yet this was apparently the rôle assigned to him. He declined it, and proposed instead to distract attention from the main plot by possessing himself of the Chesapeake and making things uncomfortable for Cornwallis.

And what did Washington do on finding himself thwarted and crossed and his darling plan discarded? Did he repine? Did he expostulate? Not at all. He set his own inclinations aside, and resolved to support De Grasse's plan with every man that he could find. He resolved to transfer his main army from New York to the Chesapeake. The more he thought over the matter, the better pleased he was. There was no reason, if due care was taken, why General Clinton should discover the radical change of plan. He gave orders that his forces should gradually melt away, creep away, crawl away, silently, slowly, in detachments. Though the movement began before Hood reached Sandy Hook, Clinton by then had discovered nothing. His thoughts were running the other way. He had just recalled 3000 fighting-men from Cornwallis's camp to his own. When at last he discovered what was going on, it was too late. His power to act was paralysed by the absence of the fleet.

Meanwhile the vultures gathered round Cornwallis. There were the original army of 6000 under Lafayette, 4000 brought from the Indies by De Grasse, 4000 more from Rhode Island, and 8000 under Washington from New York. Twenty-two thousand men with a hundred of the heaviest guns! And in the midst Cornwallis, the only Englishman throughout the war who had dared on land to look for laurels! There he stood at bay with 5000 troops worn and exhausted by prolonged marches. He had but a handful of little 6-pounders with which to make a show of defence. He is a pathetic figure, bravely enduring for the flag of Britain, wistfully gazing seawards for the fleet.

At the end of September the investment of Yorktown was complete. Early in October Washington began to push in his lines and his huge force rolled onwards like a tidal wave.

By this time Graves and Hood were back at New York and learned the astounding news. With haste they sought to avert the catastrophe. There was no question now about forcing their way into the Chesapeake: they would do so even if opposed by a hundred ships. In the very nick of time, as it seemed, three ships arrived from England. Then there were two more ready in the dockyard. Five and eighteen, not so bad: they would win through yet. General Clinton sent 5000 of his troops, 5000, the half of his force. How little even then did he know! On 19th October all was ready, and Graves gave the word to start. Speed was the word: every moment precious.

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A few days later they were back at the Chesapeake. But, alas! too late. At Yorktown the flag no longer flew. On 19th October, the very day on which their preparations had been completed, Cornwallis had surrendered and with him the entire British army. For once the French had secured the command of the sea and used it effectively.

The blow was for Britain irremediable.

At the battle of Chesapeake Bay the stake was America; and the British sailors lost: lost, without knowing what it was for which they fought.

FRIGATE BAY

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1782

Nelson never did a more brilliant deed than this of Hood's.—MAHAN.

In England the news of Cornwallis's surrender caused utter consternation. Men did not judge Graves to be either guilty or incompetent, but they assured themselves again and again that if Rodney had been on the spot, the disaster could not possibly have happened. Rodney had not had time to enjoy the repose which his health required; but at the King's request he immediately put himself in readiness to seek De Grasse and punish his misdeeds.

The news that brought dismay to England almost intoxicated France with joy. The hereditary foe at last was humbled to the

very dust. And now was the time to strike again, to rain blow upon blow and force the once-proud islanders upon their knees to sue for terms. Fresh counsel was taken with the Court of Spain. It was agreed that France should be handsomely established in the West Indies and receive all the Lesser Antilles. In addition Spain agreed to evacuate her half of Hispaniola if France joined her in recovering Jamaica. Extensive preparations were put in hand at Brest and Cadiz, so that reinforcements might set out before the end of the year.

De Grasse was back in the Indies again by November, 1781. Before his arrival the effect of his victory had made itself felt. A swoop had been made on St. Eustatius by a scratch collection of small craft. The assault was quite unexpected. The Governor was in his bath. No blood was shed. The possessions of Britain fell like autumn leaves. De Grasse now in leisurely fashion proceeded to count on his fingers the remaining little tasks to be accomplished before all was done. There was St. Lucia, properly a French possession, bound in due time to return to its allegiance; there was wind-protected Barbados; and there were the British Leeward Isles. Something might well be done before reinforcements mustered for Jamaica.

At the beginning of January, 1782, he dropped anchor in Frigate Bay, St. Kitts, and put ashore a powerful force numbering from 8000 to 9000 men. Against such an army the little garrison of 600 could not hope to contend in the field. But they scorned to surrender. They betook themselves to Brimstone Hill; and flung defiance at the foe.

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It was some time after De Grasse that Admiral Hood was able to leave the North American station. He tried to convince his superiors that wisdom now demanded the transference of the entire fleet to the south; that their sole concern in North American waters had been settled for ever against them; and that unless a tremendous effort were made, the French would make a clean sweep of all the British possessions in the Indies. His warnings fell on deaf ears: he secured but four ships in addition to his original fourteen. When he arrived at Barbados in December his fleet should, according to all calculations, have been good for nothing. It was torn and rickety; tired and hungry; short of

food, short of sail-cloth, short of rope and short of spars. It had been through one of the most tragic and heart-breaking campaigns. It was faced by the prospect of operations against a vastly superior force inspired by victory. If depression, despondency and black despair had settled down on the little fleet, it would not have been unnatural. Yet it was at this time that Hood wrote home: "I will seek and give battle to the Count de Grasse, be his numbers as they may".

When British arms were shamed and wrong dispositions made Hood spoke with scathing satire and heaped abuse on the delinquents. But all this was changed when he himself commanded. Kindness and geniality replaced his caustic wit and, as if by magic, a cheerful temper pervaded the whole fleet. They were pleased with themselves and pleased with their commander, ready to go anywhere and do anything. His living sympathy brought the best out of every man: and his knowledge of every vessel under his flag was as intimate and familiar as that of the actual captain who commanded her. Hence his confidence.

It was on 14th January that Hood heard of the investment of St. Kitts. He was still at Barbados, a long way from the scene of danger. He set out at once. He had already scraped together three additional ships. These brought his total to twenty-one. And then there was one ship at Antigua. She was worth having. Anything was worth having. And Antigua was on the road to St. Kitts. They made Antigua a week later and in two days equipped the extra vessel for sea, and took in some supplies. Bread was a difficulty. But Hood made extensive purchases of bread-fruit and yams. At nightfall on the 23rd he set out.

St. Kitts lies midway between St. Eustatius and Nevis. From the latter it is separated by the Narrows, a passage too shallow and unsafe for ships of the line. It is said that Columbus gave the island his own name because of the resemblance it bore to an image of his patron saint. Certainly the shape is peculiar, not unlike that of an inverted ninepin. Frigate Bay lies on the western or leeward side. The word harbour may be applied to it on the clear understanding that there is nothing better than an open roadstead.

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When De Grasse caught sight of the English about noon on 24th January, his first thought was that they must have been reinforced. He observed them narrowly and as they came into view he counted them and saw reason to alter his opinion. Here was a fleet no more stalwart than that which he had tricked and outwitted off the Chesapeake. Why then had they come? Could they be so fondly foolish as to believe that they would prevent him from landing the legions of France? Perhaps they were ignorant that he had been here a fortnight? Perhaps they were entirely ignorant of the whole state of affairs and were actually coming to St. Kitts, not knowing that he, De Grasse, was there at all?

At this point the Frenchman's thoughts were interrupted by a sudden change in the attitude of the intruders. The British ships had weathered the southern end of Nevis in a draggle-tailed fashion. But now agitated signals fluttered at the masthead of their flagships; and the whole fleet put about. They had seen him at last, had they? Foresails and topsails before? But now, all canvas set and hands out lashing studding-sails? They were flying, were they? His surmises were right then. They had blundered into a trap. Fools! Fools! They were too late. They should not escape him thus.

So the evening fell and the English fled and De Grasse hauled up his anchors, shook out his sheets and stood after them to the south.

Next morning the face of affairs confessedly had changed. The British fleet, so far from being hull down on the horizon, were all drawn up in line ahead—to windward; and not only that, but they were gone about and were standing northward. De Grasse began to feel uneasy. The excitement roused in his own fleet by the prospect of a chase had not conduced to orderly arrangements. It was necessary to make speedy amends. As he hoisted signals, the *Barfleur* did the same and the undersized insignificant English ships put their helms up. Were they then about to deliver an attack before their opponents were properly aligned? De Grasse could but believe the evidence of his senses; and reluctantly ran before the wind intending to re-form to leeward.

As he did so the British hauled to the wind again. Once more the signals fluttered at the *Barfleur's* masthead, and the message was obviously expected: for the whole fleet hastened to make all

sail. Every reef was shaken out. Even steering sails were set. Southwards the night before, and northwards now. What did it all mean?

It meant that De Grasse was tricked: that 25th January was the "Day of Dupes". By feigning flight Hood had drawn his opponents from their anchorage, by a feigned attack he had gained himself elbow-room; elbow-room under the island shores to work his way northward to the forsaken berths and seize them for himself.

De Grasse's anger was roused. He saw his mistake and tried by reckless bravery to save himself from the consequences. His fleet was standing to the south, but he swung it round and precipitated himself in pursuit. The best that he could hope for was to overtake the British rear and delay its progress till the rest of his force worked their way into battle. Never perhaps did De Grasse make so notable and strenuous an effort. About half-past two the French found their range and opened a hot attack.

Hood had foreseen this danger and provided for it. He had set in his rear a trap. He had stationed there three captains than whom no better ever walked a quarter-deck. There was Edmund Affleck of the *Bedford*, who had greatly distinguished himself in Rodney's "Moonlight Battle" off St. Vincent. Beside him in the *Resolution* was Lord Robert Manners, a worthy son of the gallant Marquis of Granby, and to Hood his "dearest Bob". And with these two was rosy-cheeked, rubicund "Billy-go-tight," otherwise Captain William Cornwallis of the hundred nicknames, Captain at present of the *Canada*, the idol of all true British seamen, the complete picture of skill, courage and disinterestedness.

If De Grasse had been able to bring all his ships in succession against Affleck, Lord Robert and Cornwallis it may still be doubted whether he would have achieved much more than Lars Porsena against the dauntless three of old. But Admiral Hood had another little surprise in store. While De Grasse gave all his attention to the British rear, the British van and as many of the British centre as were unopposed were already anchoring. Anchoring! And in a manner quite unprecedented. Each ship as she came to the mooring ground went about on the opposite tack and heaved her best bower overboard, not with any idea of safety or comfort, but in exactly that position which would enable her with telling effect to commence an unexpected attack precisely at that critical

moment when the enemy least expected it. Theoretically the English rearguard, just as their own turn came to anchor on the bank, ought to have been beaten into matchwood by the continuous and successive cannonading of ship after ship in the French centre and rear. In reality the French centre and rear had their work cut out to reply to the roaring broadsides of an equal force which according to all the text-books could not possibly be where beyond all manner of dispute it certainly was. [MAP, FIG. 1.]

Horatius, Lartius and Herminius, who had covered the crafty movements of their chief, now without difficulty rejoined the line, covered in turn by their admiring friends.

Thus did Sir Samuel Hood on that famous 25th January, 1782, turn a superior fleet out of Frigate Bay and occupy the selfsame position himself. The joyous humour of it infected the fleet and a ripple of laughter spread from deck to deck. The veterans, who had growled at Martinique and cursed at Grenada and the Chesapeake, felt young again: and many a yarn was spun that night of glorious seafights in the olden days when Anson took home a whole enemy's fleet or Hawke swooped down on his terrified prey. Well, well! The old days were gone; past recall perhaps. But here was a man. Hood was the boy, lads. He'd drub the monsieurs yet.*

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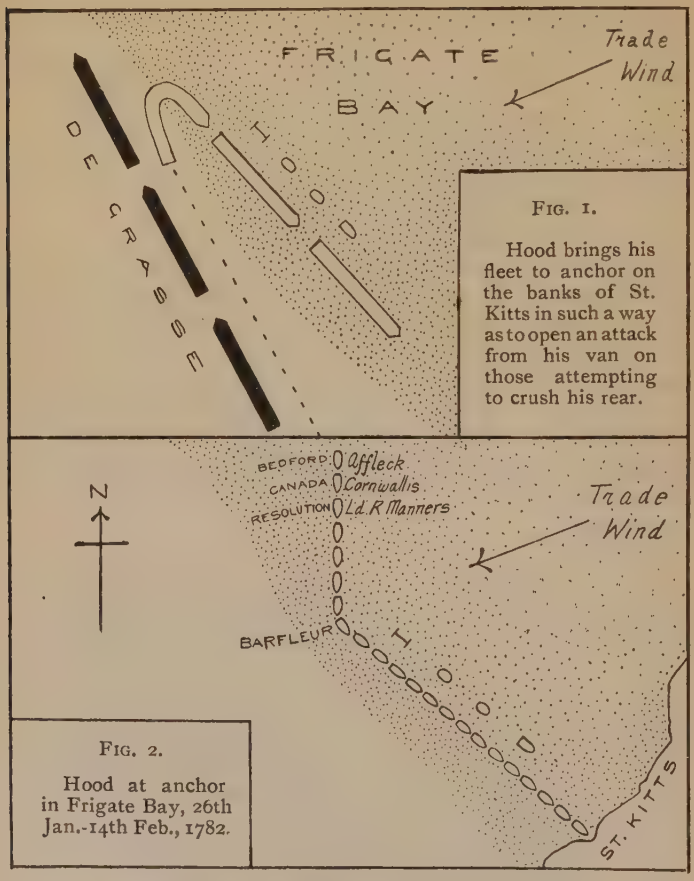
It is not for one moment to be supposed that De Grasse could sit still and meekly acquiesce in the situation. Not only was his honour wounded, but the English fleet now intervened between him and the army he had set on shore. An immediate attack was inevitable, and at earliest dawn on the 26th he prepared to deliver it. But Sir Samuel was ready for him and fuller of devices than ever. He had won the anchorage. It was now his business to hold it. This was a difficult task, for the bay lent itself but little to purposes of defence. When Barrington held St. Lucia he drew his ships across the mouth of a land-locked inlet and

* After Graves's unfortunate and indecisive battle Hood gave it as his opinion that the British fleet should seize De Grasse's anchorage. Those who heard the advice branded the counsellor as a madman, a braggart or worse. But no one to-day will see any meaning in these words. For in Frigate Bay the British fleet accomplished that which alone could have saved Cornwallis in the Chesapeake and so preserved the dominion of North America for the tottering British Empire.

strengthened his flanks by batteries on land. But Frigate Bay was unconfined and ashore were the legions of France.

Hood did the best that he could with one or two minor pos-



HOOD'S OPERATIONS IN FRIGATE BAY, ST. KITTS,
January and February, 1782

sibilities. He drew the tip of his left wing as near as he dared to the coast; and at the extremity of the other stationed the three noble champions of the day before. But the essence of his scheme

lay in his subtle use of an unchanging wind. He drew up his fleet in a V shaped formation with a very open angle marked at its apex by the *Barfleur*. [MAP, FIG. 2.] The two sides containing the angle he constructed six points (67° 30′) from the wind, and as no ship of the line could sail within six points of the wind it followed that De Grasse could no more break into the anchorage by a massed frontal attack at a given point than he could annihilate the exposed end of the right wing by crossing the T in line ahead. There was only one mode of attack open to De Grasse. His ships must pass along the front of Hood's line, receiving the fire of every vessel in turn.

De Grasse did not shirk the issue. Gallantly he stood up to his enemy's left wing and did his best. He could not get near the first two ships that had land and wind for protection. But that was no reason for sparing him. So the two ships slewed themselves round and enjoyed the luxury of raking every single French vessel as she came into the zone of fire. The British too had no longer need of spars and sails. They were invulnerable up aloft, just the place where the French liked to hit them: and freed from the labour of trimming the sails were able to give all their attention to the task of firing the guns. After a first repulse De Grasse gamely attacked a second time. 'Tis true he ignored the left wing altogether, but he sidled past the centre and right, backing a topsail now and then to stay and fight the better.

That the British were not to be moved was plain; and for the time at least De Grasse desisted. He had lost considerably in the encounter and achieved nothing at all. His enemies, better pleased than ever with the turn events were taking, were regaled by a pleasing sight on the 27th. The great *Ville de Paris*, De Grasse's flagship, and the mightiest ship ever built since the time of Noah's Ark, lay on her heel the livelong day to repair her gaping shot-holes.

It was now Hood's turn to play. During his flying visit to Antigua he had taken on board some 1400 troops. They were insufficient to rout 8000, but he landed them. They might either join the garrison of Brimstone Hill or at least effect a diversion in their favour. At the worst they could but be taken on board again.

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Hood and his gallant little pack of bulldogs must now be left on guard, while in spirit the reader flies across the Atlantic to see what has become of the munificent reinforcements which are to enable De Grasse to wrest Jamaica from the dying grasp of Britain.

The scale of the preparations being forwarded in Brest, and the deadliness of their menace, did not of course escape attention at home. At the beginning of December, 1781, Lord Sandwich resolved to prevent the French from setting out at all. For this purpose he chose as his instrument Admiral Richard Kempenfelt, accounted by one or two friends the master-mind of the Navy, and to ninety-nine men in a hundred at that date quite unknown. Born in 1718 Kempenfelt had seen service on both sides of the world in the days of Chatham and victory; in the present fatal war his lot had been cast with the Channel fleet and in that school of bitter experience he had done invaluable work. [BELOW, pp. 128-32.] In the autumn of 1781 he had already served as flag-captain to three commanders who had vainly endeavoured to fill great Keppel's place. In November he was raised to flag-rank and hoisted his flag in the *Victory*.

Lord Sandwich nominated for Kempenfelt quite a handsome fleet, but as usual the vessels named were not forthcoming. Delay ensued, and the First Lord was pleased to be annoyed! He wrote to the Admiral and drew his attention to the sufficiently obvious fact that he would miss the opportunity of meeting the French if he waited much longer for the ships. This was the treatment that had already driven many to revolt. But Kempenfelt neither fumed nor fretted. He instantly made formal application to the Admiralty for PERMISSION TO SAIL WITH A SMALLER FLEET THAN THAT WHICH HIS OWN JUDGMENT DEEMED NECESSARY.

The twelfth of December, 1781, rose hazy on the water with a promise of thick fog. Kempenfelt was early astir. The *Victory* was now some fifty miles to south of Ushant. Brest was empty: no sign as yet of the French. Sleepless himself, the Admiral did not for that trust alone the *Victory's* eyes. Like Hawke of old he had his fleetest frigate nosing her way well in advance in search of game. The *Tisiphone* was the hound in question, commanded by James Saumarez, afterwards Nelson's second at the Nile.

Kempenfelt peered through the mist at the *Tisiphone*, and at

eight o'clock she signalled back to him, "Sails in the south-east". It was the much talked-of fleet. Nineteen sail of the line there were, frigates proportionate; a great fleet with six flag-officers and a most important convoy with naval stores, military stores and an army for the subjugation of Jamaica; the whole under De Guichen, Rodney's opponent at Martinique. Now if Kempenfelt was to tackle the fighting fleet he required at least twenty ships; and if he was to account for the convoy as well, he required in addition a fine force of cruisers to pursue while he held up the fighters. But his fleet, all told, numbered no more than twelve of the line and two frigates.

To have found the French before the French found him was therefore fit subject for congratulation. But "Kempy" did not fly. Happily for Britain he was not made that way. Blessing the fog he wrapped himself up in it. The French afterwards vowed that it concealed him wholly from them. That may or may not have been so. It certainly did not prevent him from seeing them, from counting them, from noting their disposition. With discerning eye he saw in De Guichen's arrangements an irreparable flaw. De Guichen did not see it, and De Guichen was reckoned the finest seaman in France. But to say truth Kempenfelt saw more clearly through a fog than most men could see in clear sunshine.

De Guichen was quietly making towards Cadiz, his rendezvous with the Spaniards. The wind at south-east was not very helpful and he was working along as best he could on the port tack, with the convoy under his wing. Which wing? Do you think it mattered? Could he but have seen Kempenfelt astern crowding on every stitch of canvas, lashing to the yards his studding-sails!

De Guichen's precious convoy were to windward of his line!

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At noon next day came the blow. Kempenfelt had squeezed his little fleet astern of the French and stolen the weather gauge. Flying before the wind he came, pell-mell, helter-skelter, right into the very midst of the helpless invaluable convoy. Helpless, if it please you; helpless, with a great fleet of twenty ships and six flag-officers to leeward unable to lift a finger to assist. Never was greater loss inflicted at so trifling an expense. "A wild race, a breathless chase and there we were with ships all round us hauling down their flags!" No less than twenty prizes were made,

crammed with soldiers and laden with all the supplies that Britain so sadly lacked.

What news for the stricken empire of the seas that cheerless Christmas of 1781! In October England had lost America. In October too had died the victor of Quiberon, the great Lord Hawke. But in his old battleground, the Bay of Biscay, a double portion of his spirit had descended on Richard Kempenfelt.

As for De Guichen, he returned to Brest, disgraced, discredited and ruined.

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Kempenfelt did not forget to send his news to Admiral Hood. In selecting a messenger his choice fell on the commander of the *Tisiphone*. Alert and grateful, Saumarez sped away upon his task. He kept an excellent pace and all went well till he came within hail of his destination. It was the last day of January. In Frigate Bay Hood's fleet was still on guard and still De Grasse observed from a respectful distance. How was the *Tisiphone* to join her friends? Saumarez soon made up his mind. The shallow channel between St. Kitts and Nevis might not allow a battleship to pass, but there was water enough for a coracle; and the *Tisiphone* was little more. Under cover of darkness he slipped through, and breathlessly hastened on board the *Barfleur* to make his good news known. As it spread through the fleet cheer after cheer arose with a lusty vigour that told of glad hearts and sanguine hopes.

Saumarez had done his work well, but at this point his luck all but deserted him. Sir Samuel had his own news for home and the young commander—he was barely twenty-five—found himself doomed to an immediate return. His heart sank. He gulped down something very like a sob of disappointment. Here was England's fleet in the warmest of corners. Any moment it might be called to fight for its very life. And he was not allowed to stay and enjoy the fun. Providence however intervened. One of Hood's captains was sickly and longing for home. He applied for an exchange into the *Tisiphone*. Hood granted his request and Captain Saumarez was promoted to the command of a battleship, the darling object of his dreams.

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For all but a fortnight after Saumarez's arrival the *Barfleur* and her consorts maintained their weary watch. The little force that

Hood had put ashore had been unable to break through the cordon that surrounded Brimstone Hill. Beyond the satisfaction of separating the army and fleet of France there was nothing to be done.

On 13th February, 1782, the plucky garrison was starved into surrender and the whole island of St. Kitts passed into the hands of the French.

This was exactly what De Grasse was waiting for. He plumed himself as he thought how from the beginning he had seen this inevitable end. The whole position was changed. The British Admiral was no longer master of the situation. The asylum which with so much insolence he had taken was now become a death-trap. Without the loss of a moment De Grasse got into touch with the army ashore, and found it ready for instant co-operation. There were still the best part of 8000 troops, and if with their guns they could not make the anchorage uninhabitable, then indeed was the army of France shamed. And De Grasse had spent his time, it must be confessed, with credit to himself. After the last encounter he had twenty-nine ships in need of repair. He had repaired them. He had reprovisioned them. Best of all, he had added to their number. There were no longer twenty-nine but thirty-eight. Thirty-eight to the British twenty-two. As evening fell on 14th February, and as the English lowered their topsails and made all snug for the night, De Grasse began to grow impatient. He could hardly wait for the morning. Yet he was not without a sense of pity for his victims. There they lay, unconscious outwardly of the fate that awaited them on the morrow.

As De Grasse elaborated the details of his sudden joint attack, Hood made a few simple preparations. He summoned on board the *Barfleur* one lieutenant from every ship. They came aboard and were greeted in his customary fashion, simple and confiding. He called attention to his clock. How did his time compare with theirs? Marked differences? He thought as much. He would trouble them all to regulate their watches by his clock. All were unanimous? Good. The safety of His Majesty's fleet might depend upon the fraction of a minute. When darkness fell sails were to be set and one anchor weighed. At eleven o'clock the night would be at its darkest. Then in every ship let a carpenter be standing axe in hand beside the cable of the little bower.

As each of the twenty-two watches pointed to eleven, each of his auditors would raise a hand; one blow from the axe would sever the cable; and each of the ships would fill and carry on, north-west on the starboard tack. No sounds, gentlemen, please: no shouts, no cries. Was there anything else? Ah, yes; a lantern fixed on the mooring-buoy would give the enemy something to watch. That was all; and thank you, gentlemen. No noise; no light: at six bells.

. . . . . .

When De Grasse came on board at earliest grey dawn the birds had flown. The anchorage was empty.

THE BATTLE OF THE SAINTS

APRIL 12,* 1782

Meanwhile Rodney put the finishing touch to his hurried preparations. His holiday had been cut short, but he had profited by resort to surgical aid, and was quite like his old self. He went forth not to measure swords with an equal, but to chastise an insolent upstart. There was no recklessness in him. He was sixty-four, and past the days of bravado. He did not forget that his adversary was the man who had humbled the British at Yorktown, who had established the independence of the American Republic. He knew of what his adversary was capable. He knew also of what he himself was capable. A friend wrote to wish him luck. "Many thanks," the Admiral replied. "I promise you I will bring you back a present of De Grasse." He went forth to "read the enemy a lesson"; "to uplift again the banner of St. George"; "to restore to his country dominion of the sea". Such confidence was like a breath of ocean. It was invigorating.

The winter was wild and boisterous. The promised ships were not fully assembled. There were but twelve, and Rodney had bargained for fifteen. But he would stay for nothing and left when

* "It is in reference to this famous action that the story is told of the old one-legged veteran, a patient in the Edinburgh Infirmary, who, being asked by Dr. John Barclay, 'Where did you lose your leg, my man?' briefly replied, 'At the 12th of April, your honour'. The doctor, not immediately calling to mind that great day, inquired again, 'WHAT 12th of April?' Jack looked him in the face with supreme contempt and retorted indignantly, 'WHAT 12th of April? Who ever heard of any 12th of April but ONE!'"

he could. Off Ushant the gales were upon him, the waves breaking over his ships; the vessels rolling, plunging and starting; the winds howling aloft; the veil of mist impenetrable; the rain incessant. Things could not have been worse if "Foulweather Jack" had been there. But Rodney pushed into the thick of things and forced a brave way through.

With him as Captain of the Fleet or Chief of Staff went Sir Charles Douglas, whose knowledge of gunnery in all its branches was by general confession unequalled. He had evolved improvements that went far to revolutionize the delivery of a broadside; and Rodney had in a happy hour secured his services.

The naval gun was a muzzle-loading weapon made of iron. It was stout at the breech to resist the force of the explosion and tapered away towards the mouth. It was cast in a single piece and afterwards bored.* On either side of it and nearer the breech than the muzzle to keep the balance true, were twin arms or projections called "trunnions". These served to support the ordnance on its "truck". The truck was in shape like a cigar-box with lid gone and ends knocked out. It was as strong as oak and iron could make it and was mounted on wooden wheels. At the breech end of the truck its sides were cut away in steps. By the help of these and stout wooden crows called "handspikes," the gunners were able to raise the breech and so depress the muzzle. When raised, the breech was kept in its place by a triangular wedge moved along the "bed" or floor of the truck. If it was thought desirable to aim at masts and spars, the process was reversed. Handspikes were inserted again and the "coin" or wedge drawn back.

Thus cannon shoot the higher pitches
The lower you let down their breeches.

* The size of the gun was determined by the size of the bore and the size of the bore by the size of the shot. With this reservation the remarks above are applicable to all guns from the time of Drake to the time of Nelson, for there was no real revolution in the process of construction till the engineering renaissance of the nineteenth century. The picturesque names given by Elizabethan seamen to the different calibres, such as *saker*, *falconet*, *culverin* and *demi-cannon* soon gave way to the prosaic terms of arithmetic. Some of the guns actually used at Trafalgar are still to be seen mounted on the gun-deck of the *Victory*.

Another material part of the casting was the "pomelion," a great rounded projection at the back of the gun. To this was fixed the "breeching," a mighty rope whose ends were lashed to the sides of the ship on either side of the gun port. The breeching took the recoil and such was the force to be withstood that the stoutest rope procurable was often broken as if it were thread. The recoil brought the gun back into a position ready for loading. The bore was cleaned with an instrument like a giant corkscrew called a "worm," and a damp stopper-headed mop called a "sponge". A cartridge of powder, a shot and wads were then ladled in and rammed home with a rammer, and the hardest work of all began. The gun-crew by means of ropes and pulleys which they called "gun-tackle" proceeded to haul the cannon out with its nose through the port. This done, they took what precautions they could to avoid being killed by the recoil, and the captain of the team stepped forward, cleared out the vent with a priming-iron, filled the hole with powder from his flask, kindled his match into a flame, fixed it to the end of a linstock and applied it to the vent.

The gunner's work was dangerous, lengthy, and strictly limited in its possibilities.

The chief danger arose from premature explosions and the hideous violence with which the guns recoiled. Douglas introduced wetted wads, and so prevented the cloud of fiery sparks invariable when wads were dry. Then he inserted into the breeching a strong steel spring, and behind the back-wheels of the truck set inclined planes with corrugated bottoms. By these means the gun was checked on the run-back, before it had drawn the breeching taut. So the possibility of a broken breeching had no more to be considered. The chief waste of time lay in the cleaning of the bore after each discharge and in the very laborious process of firing. Sir Charles looked to these processes next. He substituted for the silk which had hitherto formed the covering of cartridges a flannel overall. This rendered "worming" no longer necessary. But an even more important time-saver was the priming-tube. Douglas procured numbers of quills and had them filled well in advance with powder kneaded in spirits of wine. The gunner was supplied with a box of tubes and slipped one into the touch-hole before a man could say "One,

two". To take the place of the match, which had in turn to be rekindled and extinguished, he adapted the flint lock which could be released by a lanyard without the need for anyone to approach the risky spurtings of the vent. Sir Charles thus safeguarded the persons of the sailors and made it possible for them to fire their guns twice in three minutes. But great as these improvements were, they were eclipsed by a greater. Before his time, to elevate and depress the guns had been the limit of ambition. The most resourceful gunners could hardly be expected, even with the help of handspikes, to lift a piece of furniture weighing nearly three tons; at least, not in a manner to make angular fire either rapid or effective. But Douglas quickly found a way. By means of bolts placed in the side of the ship he strung up a tackle which enabled him to point his guns no less than four points (45°) before or abaft the beam.

It is but sober truth to say that the gunnery reforms of Sir Charles Douglas gave the Britons in this campaign a superiority equal to that of their ancestors who fought Sidonia and Oquendo.

The *Formidable* and her consorts arrived at Barbados on 19th February. They had crossed the Atlantic in five weeks: "scarcely credible" says Rodney. They stayed no time here; sped off to relieve St. Kitts, or at least rescue Admiral Hood. They found him at Antigua and brought him to the comforts of St. Lucia. There was much to be done. Hood's ships had been constantly employed during the whole of Rodney's absence. All needed repairs; some complete renovation. Rodney had brought out with him a reserve of stores: and knew, as few did, how to obtain the very last fraction of work from a dockyard. Things very soon began to take shape: but the remainder of February and the whole of March slipped away in patching and mending. Rodney meanwhile kept watch upon the French. He made shift to discover their real strength. He had some prisoners that Hood had captured, and he sent a messenger with flag of truce to negotiate an exchange. De Grasse was politeness itself, quite unaware that his guest had come in disguise to count his ships.

Twenty miles of sea separate Martinique from St. Lucia. Rodney planted them with a line of frigates, and every day climbed to the top of Pigeon Island to survey the horizon for himself. Below him in Gros Ilot Bay his battleships assembled, one by

one and two by two as they finished refitting in the Carenage. In all there were thirty-six, a fine force worthy of the great occasion. Hood was there, and brave Admiral Drake who fought so well at the Chesapeake: and round them gathered almost all who had distinguished themselves in the war, Cornwallis, Affleck, and Lord Robert Manners; the fortunate Saumarez; Alan Gardner who made his name at Grenada; and Fanshawe of the *Monmouth* who saved a convoy single-handed.

With such a force within bowshot could De Grasse still contemplate the capture of Jamaica? He had been made a laughing-stock by Hood and been robbed by Kempenfelt of his reinforcements. Under such conditions had he not cause to feel nervous?

To look at the matter in this way is to wrong De Grasse, to wrong Rodney, and to belittle the crisis which brought the two together. De Grasse was high-spirited and confident; sure of himself, certain of his destiny, and proud of his force. Hood had wriggled from his clutches, truly. But with what result? St. Kitts had fallen; Nevis with it: and on his way back to Martinique he had captured Montserrat. Where now were the Leeward Isles? Where were Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada and Tobago? Had the British been able to rescue one of them? Jamaica was doomed. As to forces there were plenty, naval and military. He himself had thirty-five ships and nearly 6000 men. At Cap François a second army waited, equal in size to his own; and there too he would be joined by the Spanish contingent, thirteen ships and 9000 troops. In all there would be nearly fifty sail and 20,000 men. Had the squadron from Brest not gone astray there would have been seventy ships and 30,000 men. But after all, what would you? The island to be conquered was not Great Britain but Jamaica; Jamaica with four ships to defend itself, four ships and 500 soldiers!

To French and Spanish the event was a foregone conclusion; and even Britons will admit that for the handling of a vast composite force, De Grasse was pre-eminently fitted. He had good officers. De Vaudreuil, his second, was a born sailor of grand old Breton fighting stock. De Bougainville was one of the most remarkable and versatile men of his age: author, circumnavigator, scientist and soldier.

With the eye of faith De Grasse could see the coming cam-

paign complete. He would slip out of port and gain several hours' start. The nearest route to Jamaica lay west with the Trades behind. He would go north. All round the Caribbean were a chain of French possessions, Dominica, Desirade, Marie Galante, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Eustace, and finally Cap François. What did not belong to France belonged to her ally Spain. At any one of a dozen ports he could look for help and shelter. This, thank goodness, was no English Channel. He would go north. He would lead who followed a pretty dance and arriving first at Jamaica would land his men and wait. The English would come panting up. A battle would ensue. The English would hit out blindly as they always did. He would show a nicer sense of manœuvring and give them cause to revisit a dockyard. And where would they go? Beat back against the trades to St. Lucia? By the time they returned the allied army, 20,000 strong, would have overcome resistance. Such then was the vision of the man who won Chesapeake Bay; and it may at once be conceded that unless the whole verdict of the war were reversed, unless the Britons could devise some method of forcing the French to play the game in the manner they understood it, Jamaica was lost, the Empire was lost, Britain's star for ever set.

But Rodney was at St. Lucia. Daily he sat on the rocky watch-tower that looks toward Martinique.

. . . . . .

It was on 8th April that the news was brought. The French were out of Port Royal, and winging away to the north. The Admiral heard the news at eight in the morning. There was general happiness in the fleet, but no excitement. Every man knew what to do.

Within two hours they were under way.

The wind was blowing freshly when the chase began. All day long the Britons sailed: they sailed throughout the night. Before dark there were men at the masthead who vowed they saw sails to the north. At daybreak there was no need to go to the masthead. There were the Frenchmen, sure enough, visible from the decks. The hearts of the English glowed.

Rodney's headlong speed had formed no part of De Grasse's calculations.

The scene of the encounter was The Saints passage, the water-

way to the north of Dominica. The channel is divided thirteen miles from Dominica and ten from Guadeloupe by a cluster of islets discovered by Columbus on a certain All Saints' Day.

De Grasse's first thoughts were for the helpless. He had with him a convoy of 150 sail. These he ordered to Guadeloupe. It might be thought that he thereby sacrificed his chance of success. But the army was not in the convoy. The convoy was one of merchandise. The soldiers, nearly 6000 of them, were embarked in the battleships. Never since Armada days were warships ever so crowded. But if he kept his soldiers, De Grasse was obliged to detach two ships (the smallest of course) to shield the convoy. This left him but thirty-three to fight against thirty-six.

But Rodney was labouring under a severer handicap. When he overtook his adversary, De Grasse had reached the fairway of The Saints. The British van under Admiral Hood made haste to fling itself upon him; but as De Grasse turned to fight, Rodney found to his horror that the rest of his force were becalmed under the lee of Dominica.

Here was an opportunity. De Grasse might have matched his thirty-three ships with less than half their number. He did in effect do so, but not with intent to kill. He used his superior numbers with some skill; and carefully retaining his wind, cannonaded the English at extreme range, hoping to cripple them aloft and hinder pursuit. Rodney strained every nerve to pull and push his ships into the firing-line. He dropped his boats and towed them. He set sails to entangle the breeze. Little by little he worked his will and De Grasse then thought the time had come to discontinue the action.

Such was the battle of 9th April. On the French side the injuries of the *Cato* compelled her to retire and reduce De Grasse's fleet to thirty-two. But if the British were as incapacitated as they generally were after such a bout, the absence of a single ship would not matter very much. When the pursuers hove to, as if farther progress were impossible, De Grasse found no difficulty in believing what his heart desired to believe. Rodney had guessed his thoughts and resolved to humour him. The British injuries were slight and easily repaired. But De Grasse must not know, must not even suspect. Therefore Rodney halted for a while; not weary and hurt, but shamming.

The French gained somewhat during the night and on the following day maintained their lead. But fortune now leant to the British side. On the night of the 10th De Grasse's *Zélé* ran into her neighbour, the *Jason*. Both ships suffered, the *Jason* severely. There was nothing for it. De Grasse had to part with another ship. And what was more to the English taste, when Thursday, 11th April, dawned, there was the *Zélé* fallen behind. Would De Grasse stand by and risk a general engagement; or would he throw away another pawn?

The fate of the British Empire depended on his decision.

If De Grasse had sacrificed the *Zélé* there is reason to believe that, without further accidents, he might still have won the race. De Grasse was crafty, but he was also a man of honour. He could not desert the wounded ship: and as evening fell, he backed a topsail and with the *Ville de Paris* stood to her relief.

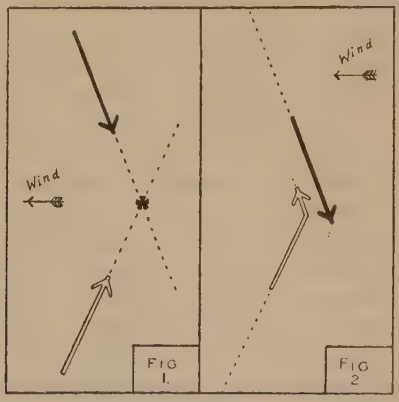
Rodney had hardly closed an eye since he left St. Lucia, but with all lights masked or extinguished he manœuvred through the night. Invisible to the French, he kept their lanterns in view and hour by hour so moved his ships as best to be ready for the morrow. There was no accident among the British ships. But De Grasse was ill-repaid for his nobility. The ungrateful *Zélé* again collided, this time with her devoted rescuer. The great flagship suffered hardly at all, but at daylight it was seen that the *Zélé* was ruined. Her foremast and bowsprit lay prostrate across her forecastle and De Grasse gave orders to La Peyrouse * to take the wretched derelict in tow. The business was difficult. Time was lost. The two vessels, helper and helpless, made little pace and perilous leeway. Matters were again critical. If De Grasse brought his entire fleet to the rescue, the *Zélé* might escape. If he sacrificed her now, he had little excuse, for the Britons had all but overhauled him.

De Grasse had no more than thirty ships left, but he hoisted his signals for battle array and turned his fleet to the south.

In the early hours of that April morning spirits rose high among the British. Not only did they outnumber the French for the first time since the war began, but the superb handling of their chief had forced the foe to stand and fight. The last three years had been bitter years, but they had been years of fruitful

* The famous explorer.

discipline, preparation it would almost seem for this last supreme event. The line was formed with beautiful mechanical rapidity. Each ship moved with rhythmical precision. Every man desired to do his best and Rodney's eagle eye was over all. There was at the outset a race for the weather gauge as the hostile fleets approached on opposite tacks. The wind, as ever, was easterly and each force sailed as close to it as possible. Their courses, if rigidly adhered to, would intersect one another; and therefore the fleet that reached the point of intersection first [* in Fig. 1] would gain the windward position.



To add to the manœuvring power of his fleet Rodney had changed its order; setting in the van Drake's squadron, for Hood's had suffered somewhat on the 9th. But the French won the first game of the rubber. They were earliest past the point of intersection and gained the weather gauge. When Rodney broke his battle-flag at the fore and actual firing began, the *Marlborough* leading the British line fetched the sixth or seventh ship of the French [Fig. 2]; and to avoid collision was obliged to weather her helm and run some points off the wind. Henceforward the British sailed no longer in close-hauled line and could, if occasion offered, turn their noses nearer the breeze. It should be noted that the opening of the engagement corresponded exactly with that of Ushant. The opposing fleets, in contact, were being pulled across each other with considerable noise and little else.

A battle fought on opposite tacks no doubt had its attractions for De Grasse. It could not be unduly prolonged. If the British had been obliged to content themselves with sliding slowly and closely along the lee of the enemy's line, two hours perhaps would have seen the close of the affray. As a matter of fact, the first broadside was fired about forty minutes past seven and the last at sunset. For eleven hours the tumult raged.

The *Marlborough* was followed by the rest of the English van. Admiral Drake's *Princessa*, a Spaniard captured in the Moonlight battle, was in the centre of the squadron, and the rearward was closed by young Captain Saumarez in the *Russell*. No one present was more keenly anxious to win distinction, but while the battle continued in so processional a sort the chances were evenly divided.

Of Rodney's own division the leading ship was the *Hercules*. Her commander, Captain Savage, was well known in the fleet and quite a character. He was brave as a lion, a great believer in British as contrasted with any spurious form of courage, lacking in dignity, "full of strange oaths," and a martyr to the gout. Forsaking his chair he greeted each enemy as she came alongside with a hail of shot and a torrent of abuse which he bellowed down his trumpet. Badly wounded he was carried below, but returning had himself propped in his seat and there sat for the rest of the battle, hailing the enemy in language which it was well for them they could not understand. When the last of them was past he yelled for the helm to be put down and suddenly luffed up under the stern of the sternmost, raking her contemptuously just as she thought she was rid of him.

Not far astern of the *Hercules* came the *Resolution*, commanded by the brave Lord Robert Manners. Other ships followed and then, in the very centre of the British fleet, came the flagship herself, the *Formidable*. Her seconds ahead and astern were worthy companions. Ahead was the *Duke* with a gorgeous figurehead of the victor of Culloden Moor. Her captain was Alan Gardner. And astern was the *Namur*, captained by Fanshawe who saved the convoy at Grenada. All three ships, *Duke*, *Formidable* and *Namur*, were first-rates. In placing them together Rodney may have been attempting in a newer form the old idea of a massed attack which he had first exemplified at Martinique. In any case

the combination was extraordinarily effective. The ships were armed with the vicious carronades, the weapon of all others for a hand-to-hand engagement; and the improvements of Sir Charles Douglas enabled them to fire three rounds before the enemy could bear at all. Playing into one another's hands they bore down all opposition.

The scene on board the flagship is still discernible. The smoke of battle and the lapse of time have not obscured it. The principal occupants of the quarter-deck were Rodney himself, Sir Charles Douglas, Dr. Blane and a midshipman named Dashwood. Rodney divided his time between walking and sitting. A chair was placed for him. But occasionally he would walk right aft through the cabin to the stern gallery to see how things were going in his wake. On one of these excursions he perceived some lemons on the cabin table and, feeling thirsty, called to Dashwood and told him to make a lemon-squash. Dashwood did well enough till he came to the stirring. Then there was nothing handy for his purpose and he ventured to use his dirk. But Rodney, always fastidious, intervened. "That kind of thing is all very well for the midshipmen's mess," he said. "Drink that yourself and send my steward here." Dashwood obeyed the first part of his instructions with alacrity, but does not seem to have been equally successful in discovering the steward. Rodney therefore quartered a lemon and held the fruit to his lips. This was all the refreshment he had during the whole of the eleven hours. And the grimy nauseous smoke made breathing difficult.

The *Formidable* about half-past nine drew alongside of De Grasse's *Ville de Paris*. Rodney and the little group around him peered at the monster through the smoke. But their attention was recalled to the *Formidable* by an episode that set the gravest of them smiling. A shot from the *Ville de Paris* struck a hen-coop that had been left on the spar-deck. Out from the ruin of his home fluttered a little bantam-cock and impudently perched himself on the rail of the poop. He took the keenest interest in the strife, "and at every broadside poured into the *Ville de Paris* cheered the crew with his shrill clarion and clapped his wings as if in approbation". Rodney was charmed and gave orders that the bird should be pampered and petted for the rest of its life.

The *Ville de Paris* was stationed in the very middle of the French

centre. Rodney forged ahead and passed on towards the rearward of De Grasse's division.

And now came the crisis of the battle.

By ten o'clock the morning had ripened. The sun was well up in the sky. The chilliness of night was entirely gone. The day was hot: the sky cloudless: the sea a brilliant blue. Under these conditions the wind began to veer and from the east swung round four points to the south. The change, coming as it did when the lists were set, was of the utmost consequence. The British, while the wind remained east, had a point or two to spare on the weather side of their line. After the breeze shifted they could (without going within six points of it) sail to the E.N.E. In fact they could cut right athwart the course that De Grasse's fleet was steering.

And this is what they did!

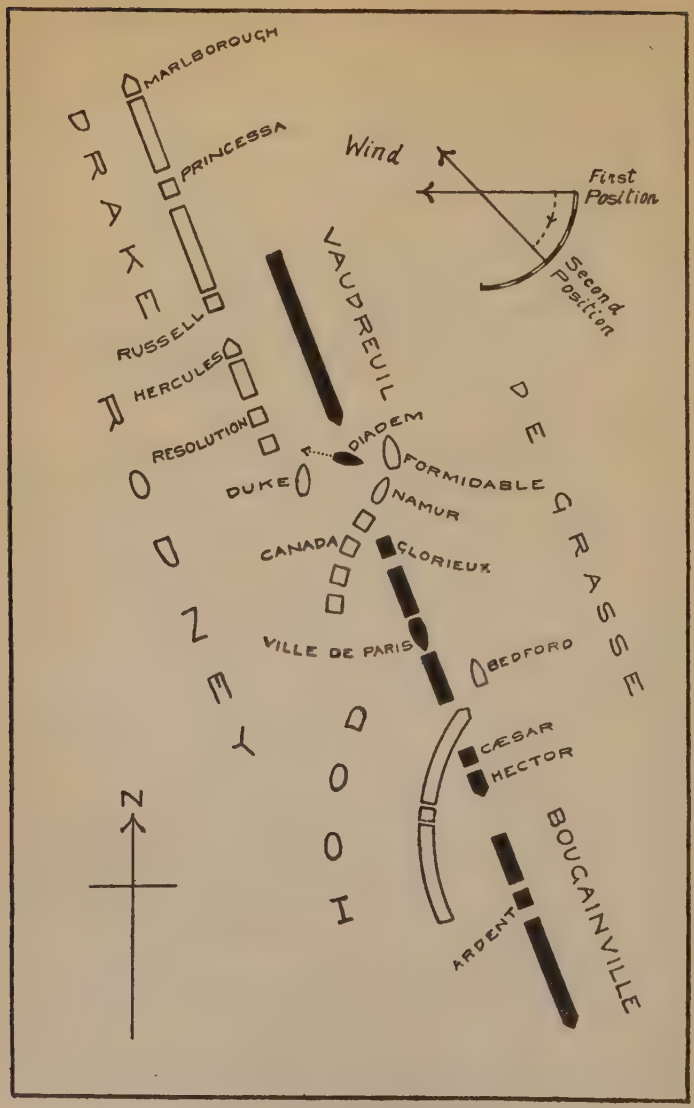
When the crisis arrived the *Formidable* had come alongside of the *Glorieux*. The *Glorieux* had already received a warm welcome from the British van. She had been battered by the *Hercules* and torn by the *Resolution*. She had come under the "dreadful fire" of Alan Gardner's *Duke*, who inheriting a name for butchery, mowed down her every stick, ensign-staff and bowsprit, fore and mizen and main. But even in her ruin the *Glorieux* knew how to fight. As she came into the *Formidable's* fire, the carpenters nailed her colours to the stump of a broken mast. While they did so a seaman held aloft a flag upon a pike. One of Rodney's musketeers hit his arm with a bullet. The standard-bearer quietly moved his burden to the other hand.

Last of De Grasse's division and next astern of the *Glorieux* sailed the *Diadem*. She was still close-hauled when the trade-wind shifted to the south. She could no longer hold her course: had to put up her helm and give way. But she had suffered, and the emergency caught her agasp. She hesitated, refused to answer her helm, and was suddenly taken aback.*

A cleft appeared in De Grasse's line immediately ahead of her.

To those on board the *Formidable*, engaged with the *Glorieux*, the veering wind and the yawning gap seemed in their happy combination like an interposition of providence. Rodney saw the

* A vessel is TAKEN ABACK when her sails are caught in front by the wind and pressed against the mast.



THE BATTLE OF THE SAINTS
April 12, 1782

opportunity. Douglas saw the opportunity. They conferred for a moment. Then Rodney nodded. "Hard aport with the helm there!" Douglas cried. Over went the helm. The *Formidable* plunged through De Grasse's line; and all but one of Rodney's division made haste to follow her.*

In every British ship that witnessed the manœuvre three lusty cheers were given, and never more worthily; for Rodney's stroke was the shrewdest and subtlest delivered at sea within man's memory. Its results were far-reaching. In the first place it effectually prevented the battle from being a replica of Ushant. The excellence of the British gunnery in any case would have prevented a mere replica, but without this countercheck it is difficult to see how the battle could have been continued if the French were willing to rest content with merely gliding past. By chopping the enemy's line in two Rodney prevented them from gliding any farther.

No sooner was the helm down than he sent Dashwood flying with orders that the larboard guns should instantly be manned. He was resolved to give the enemy the benefit of both broadsides together. How the *Diadem* and the *Glorieux* remained for a moment afloat is incomprehensible, for the six British ships were "crossing the T". They were defiling past the exposed ends of the enemy's severed line. The *Diadem* and *Glorieux* were raked from stem to stern, and raked in succession again and again. What happened to the *Diadem* is uncertain. She disappeared. Below the waves, so Rodney reported: but she may have drifted from the battlefield. As for the *Glorieux*, she was still afloat. Rodney passing again to the stern gallery, to see if the rest had followed his lead, saw the *Glorieux* receive the fire of the *Canada*. The *Canada* was Cornwallis's ship, and mercilessly he let fling with all his guns. It was as if the wretched *Glorieux* had been lifted bodily and deposited to windward.

It may well be imagined into what a tangled confusion the French array were thrown. The *Diadem* (when taken aback) sat down in the very path of those who immediately followed, and before it was possible to avoid an accident one ship fell upon one and two upon two until there were four stout ships of De Vaudreuil's rear all jostled together. They were quite unable to fight.

* The exception was Affleck's *Bedford*; see below.

They formed but a single target. And Rodney's three first-rates found a deadlier way of playing in combination. The *Namur* was just in the right place. The *Duke*, Captain Gardner, ceased following the van, and joined issue on the opposite side: while Rodney hauled down the flag for the "line" and wore his ship round upon her heel. The victims with arms unwillingly locked lay in a circle of fire. The *Duke*, *Formidable*, and *Namur* poured in broadside after broadside at a range from which it was quite impossible that a single shot should miss. The carnage was appalling. It was hideous. It was ghastly. But for four years the Britons had been trifled with. They meant to make an end here and now.

Meanwhile a wonder had happened in the rear. The change of wind that threw the *Diadem* aback caught all the French by their noses and set them askew. Another gap appeared in De Grasse's line two ships from the head of his column, and Captain Affleck of the *Bedford* exploring the smoke in search of enemies, caring little as long as he found them, and responsive to the wind upon his starboard quarter, quite accidentally broke through the French line on his own account. The leading ship of Hood's column kept close in touch with him, and the whole of the British rear, as in duty bound, followed their leader.

In doing so they subjected the *Cæsar* and *Hector* to the same process beneath which the *Diadem* and *Glorieux* had groaned. And in duplicating Rodney's manœuvre they doubled its usefulness. The French were sliced into three disjointed portions, no longer capable of acting together.

Last and best, the major part of the British fleet were now to windward of their foes. It is true that they had enjoyed this benefit before, for example at the battle of the Chesapeake. But never before in fighting the French had a British force found itself with a fleet under its lee more damaged above-board than itself. As Rodney signalled to his van to go about and return at once to the battlefield, he was in the happy position of being able at last to force the French to fight to a finish: not only this, but he could mass the whole of his strength on any one of the detached fragments into which his foes were divided.

He wasted not a moment in deciding which to attack. The flag of De Grasse flaunted aloft like a challenge, and the Britons

dashed at the enemies' centre: all and every one of them, but two in the very forefront, Cornwallis and Saumarez. Saumarez had been in the British van: but, anticipating commands, had turned about and was one of the first on the trail. And as the Britons panted up, two things happened. The French were obliged to abandon those too sorely wounded to fly: and all the most gallant among them rallied around De Grasse. All the most valiant! Some ugly stories have been told of De Bougainville. The full truth, if it were known, would probably be more favourable to him than human judgments are. Perhaps he thought that the best he could do for France would be to carry his force intact from a stricken field. Perhaps he left it to the discretion of his captains whether they fled with him or stayed behind. One gallant vessel only turned and stayed.

The first to surrender was the *Glorieux*. She had fought till there was hardly a soul on board alive to make surrender. She had fought till there were no longer sufficient hands to consign the fallen to the deep. The decks were strewn with the dead and wounded. The blood, denied an egress by the piled up slain, lay about in dreadful pools. Shattered limbs were scattered about. The sight was enough to unnerve the boldest. The last lieutenant staggered to the stump of mast on which the colours had been nailed and tore off with his fingers the few strips of cloth which had once been the flag of France.

The *Cæsar* fought with furious courage also. Between one and two in the afternoon she yielded: but her tragedy was not complete till darkness fell. Her company lost all sense of decency the moment the flag was down. The prize-crew had to batten down the hatches. While they made things shipshape on the upper deck, the yelling crew below found spirits and fought each other for the privilege of drinking. One wretch stumbled into the hold with naked light and lurched against a cask of spirit with the top stove in. The flames leapt up from deck to deck and the cries of the revellers were changed to the agonized shrieks of the demented. The prize-crew did their best to fight the fire, and every ship in the British fleet sent rescue boats. All in vain. The burning planks were too fiery red to allow of any approach. The ship settled down in the waves and the survivors lay clinging to the upper spars. But now a new and ghastlier peril. All day

the sharks had glided round the fighting ships. And all day long the dead had been thrown to them. All day long the ghoulish creatures had glutted themselves: and yet were unsatisfied. They swam in shoals about the burning *Cæsar*. They were tired of dead men; preferred to feed upon the living. As the ship went down they rushed as a crowd will rush. They seized the victims, lost and seized them again. They wrestled with strong men, who clutched a floating plank, and tore them off the wreckage.

Between five and six the *Hector* surrendered. Like the *Cæsar* she also had endured the uprooting effect produced by a whole division passing astern of her. She too had fought nobly. It is true that at one moment the gunners on the main-deck stopped hauling, threw away handspikes and ran. But that was when they were being attacked by "Billy Blue". The captain of the *Hector* drew his sword and dashed among his company. He restored order and fighting was resumed. But later one of his legs was torn from the trunk, and the heart of the *Hector* beat feebly after that. It was getting late now and the sun was declining.

The fourth ship to surrender was the *Ardent*, the one gallant vessel from the squadron of Bougainville that had thrown herself before De Grasse. Her capture was rather pathetic. But it was also symbolical. The *Ardent* was the battleship flying the Union Jack that had been captured in the Channel by the allied fleet during the crisis of '79. Her recapture seemed to typify the return of England's power upon the sea.

About half an hour later the *Ville de Paris* surrendered!

How it happened De Grasse himself was never quite able to explain. He acted like one in a dream, compelled by a stronger power to do that which he had vowed he would not do. He did not know of course that Cornwallis had overtaken him; pushed his way, that masterful way, through the throng; and employed himself with careful aim in cutting away his rigging till the other ships came up. He did not know who the merciless tormentor was that had laid a ship under his stern and raked him with stinging cruelty. He had never heard of Saumarez. He was only conscious that his ship was a wreck, that not a spar remained above him, that his rudder was smashed and shot away, and that here beneath him on the quarter-deck the blood of those that had died for him was washing over his shoes. But even now,

tortured and aghast, he knew what was due to his ship. As fresh Englishmen came up, he singled out through the battle-smoke a banner he knew of old; blue at the fore, the flag of Admiral Hood. The *Ville de Paris* was not dead yet. She fired at the *Barfleur* a challenging gun. Hood was not quite certain at first what this peremptory signal might mean. To make quite sure he worked his way within pistol shot and then, hauling his wind, poured into the riddled *Ville de Paris* such a broadside as even in health would have made her groan. De Grasse, in his dreams again, somehow found his way to the halyard and lowered the flag of France with his own brave hands. Then as the sun, a magnificent orb of blood-red fire, sank gently below the waves, the crafty Admiral of the Chesapeake surrendered to the craftier Admiral who had foiled him in Frigate Bay.

Thus the *Ville de Paris* passed into British hands, the first three-decker in any war to haul her colours down. Truly it was as if the Frenchmen publicly abdicated the dominion over West Indian waters which with so much skill and so much force they had claimed from the beginning of the war.

The lowering of the Lilies was recognized by all who had not yet been captured as an urgent and insistent *sauve qui peut*. Away sped the ships of France. Bougainville and his vessels fled to the south. Six hundred miles they sped and came to Curaçoa and stopped. Two of them stopped too suddenly, ran aground, and struggled off after losing all their guns. De Vaudreuil and those who had stood so bravely round De Grasse made the best of their way towards Cap François in Hispaniola. They were maimed and halt. One, it is said, was cast away on the "pleasant isle of Aves," another abandoned and burnt off the coast of Puerto Rico. Slowly they wended their way, a forlorn and miserable band. It took them the best part of a fortnight to reach their anchorage. Hood put to sea with a squadron to spy nearly a week after the battle, and was still in time to take four of them, two being sail of the line.

The Battle of the Saints was one of the most complete and glorious victories that ever graced the annals of the fleet. It saved Jamaica. It saved the Indies. It saved the tottering Empire. And, more than all, it restored to Britain her peculiar prestige. The great seamen of the past, Drake and Blake and Rooke and

Anson and Hawke had set up before the nations an image of the British sailor superior to all that had sailed the seas before them. The Battles of Ushant and the Chesapeake, the unpunished raids of Paul Jones and the unchecked invasion of the Channel had overset the image. On 12th April Rodney lifted it up and securely set it on its pedestal.

The capture of De Grasse and his flagship would alone raise this victory to an equality with any of the glories of the past: and in addition there were the *Glorieux*, the *Hector*, the *Ardent*, the *Cato*, the *Jason*, the *Armille* and the *Ceres*, to say nothing of the *Cæsar* and the *Diadem* and other unfortunates who never saw home again.* The *Ville de Paris* acted as banker to the fleet, and on board of her were found thirty-six strong boxes with £25,000. The other prizes, appropriately enough, were just those which had been singled out to carry the siege train to Jamaica. But perhaps the best index to the magnitude of the French calamity is contained in the list of casualties. De Grasse lost 14,000 men, of whom 8000 were killed or wounded. These figures are so big that they fail at first to convey any real idea of their size. They become eloquent only when they are compared with those of the British. On board of the *Ville de Paris* there were no less than 300 slain. This figure alone was greater by forty than the total number of deaths in the thirty-six English ships. In Rodney's *Formidable* there were fourteen killed and in the whole of the fleet only two ships exceeded this figure. When all the wounded are added the total then only just passes a thousand. De Grasse and his officers could not at first believe the figures presented to them. But the truth dawned upon them at last, and with it a deeper and bitter truth that brought the tears to their eyes.

The gravest loss on the English side was the loss of Lord Robert Manners. He seemed fated from the first. In the *Resolution* he was the earliest to fall. The shots seemed to look for him. He was badly wounded in the chest. One of his arms was broken. He was injured in the right leg. He had his left leg shattered beyond repair. The surgeons were bound to take it off. Those were days before the time of chloroform. A leather pad to grasp in the hand, a wad for the mouth that the teeth might grip, were

* Never content with anything that came short of complete success, Hood professed himself, in respect of prizes, dissatisfied with the victory!

all the consolations that the cockpit afforded. Lord Robert dispensed with them. He had his left leg taken off, the bone sawed through. He made no plaint. He uttered no groan. He did not faint. He jested with the surgeons until the nerve-rack tied his tongue ; and when the operation was over, he thanked them gaily and laughed. Rodney did all that could be done for him. He ordered a ship at once to take him home. Lord Robert was nursed with loving care. But there was too little of his body left to cage so mighty a spirit. Lock-jaw supervened, and he died on the voyage. British mothers have no need to fortify their sons with stories of Sparta while the pluck of Lord Robert Manners survives for their example. Well might King George exclaim that rather would he have lost two seventy-fours. As for the Houses of Parliament, those staid assemblies were caught with the classic spirit and ordered a monument to be erected in Westminster Abbey. And there it stands to this day : with Britannia and her lion ; Neptune and his sea horse ; Fame with her trumpet, and a medallion portrait of as brave a man as ever drew a sword.

Everyone has heard of the absurd anti-climax that followed the victory.

Rodney repaired to Jamaica. The loyal islanders went almost mad with delight. So noisy and clamorous were they that for a week the Commander-in-Chief preferred to stay aboard than land and be killed by kindness. As it was, deputations in boatloads hung about his ship all day long. And then in the midst of the rejoicings, and just as Rodney was completing his preparations to destroy De Vaudreuil's rally at Cap François, came His Majesty's ship *Jupiter* with urgent dispatches from England.

Rodney tore them open, and found an order which at least was intelligible enough. He was bidden " to strike his flag and come home " !

Lord Sandwich had fallen. There was a new Government : a Government comprising those very men who had made St. Eustatius a whip to beat their political opponents.

They would not have recalled him had they but known what he had done for his country in the Indies. And they are more to be pitied than blamed : for they all but heard the news in time. Rodney's messengers crossed the Atlantic in a flash and on 18th

May were in London. It was two o'clock in the morning, but they did not scruple to wake the First Lord. He rubbed his eyes and read the news: then tried to save the situation. He called for pen and paper and in tearing haste wrote words of congratulation. Before seven his couriers were off again: and, with total disregard for horse-flesh, dashed to Portsmouth on the wings of the wind.

But Rodney's successor had sailed; sailed by the irony of fate on the very evening before! The fastest thing afloat was launched but failed to overtake him.

Rodney returned in the *Montagu*. He was caught in a storm when nearing home and driven into Bristol Channel. On a bleak November day he landed.

In a moment his dismay, chagrin and disappointment were scattered to the four winds. The wondering Admiral, now more truly amazed, was literally swept off his feet. He would condescend to accept the freedom of the city! Transports of delight among the citizens of Bristol. Nothing would serve but "an elegant cavalcade". First came "Britannia". Then there were javelin-men: a boat with trumpets, colours and laurels: a boat with drums and fifes: more trumpets, more colours, more laurels: more boats: a vessel called *The Rodney* manned by eight gentlemen in seamen's habits: sheriffs of the city: "Mars," "Minerva": more javelin-men: a medallion of George III; a large banner with the inscription "The gallant and illustrious Lord Rodney, saviour of the country, protector of its islands, and scourge of its perfidious foes": and last and best of all Rodney himself. The Government were almost forgiven for bringing him home, because —they had brought him home. A great day for Bristol. November was not the month for pageants. But it mattered not. Every man's heart glowed with the fervour of patriotism; for here was the man who had found England's banner in the dust and raised it resplendent to the confusion of all enemies. "Here's to England, my lads, the land that we live in and to Rodney for ever! Hooray!"

Rodney put up at a tavern called "The Bush". He was made very comfortable indeed, but anxious to be gone called next morning for the landlord and desired to settle the bill. Mine host looked at first aggrieved; but, summoning up all his pity for

the Admiral's defective memory, he said reprovingly, "Sir! you paid it on the Twelfth of April!"

Every town of importance in the three kingdoms sought to go mad after Bristol had set the fashion. But Rodney was not to be caught again. Freedom of cities innumerable were bestowed upon him, but in more sober style. And there were greater gifts. The King conferred a peerage. The Houses of Parliament voted their thanks and, as they had done after the Moonlight Battle, a welcome pension of two thousand pounds. Medals were struck, showing the French line broken and the legend "Rodney for ever!" Illuminations in London were never excelled. On the sign-boards even the Marquis of Granby had to abdicate. If Lady Rodney and her daughters went to concert or play, the audience cheered them at intervals the evening through and quite deranged the programme. At the next Academy the favourite picture was that of an artist called Pine, who showed the quarter-deck of the *Formidable* with Lord Rodney, the victor, and beside him Dashwood, the maker of lemonade, and the patriotic little bantam-cock.

Rewards were not stinted. Sir Samuel Hood received a peerage; and baronetcies were conferred on Admiral Drake and Commodore Edmund Affleck.

It remains to say a word or two about Rodney's manœuvre at this famous battle. Much nonsense has been talked about it. No sooner was it described in black and white than one writer found no difficulty in proving that Epaminondas had won Mantinea by the same manœuvre exactly two thousand one hundred and seventy-eight years before. Another took the opposite line, claimed for Rodney the sole credit; had sat next to Rodney at a supper-party, and heard the Admiral describe his stratagem with the help of cherry-stones. It has been well said that Rodney's *Formidable* herself could float in the ink that has been spilled in fruitless debate upon this single topic.

Two heads of discussion emerge. Who should have the credit for inventing the manœuvre? And how far did it solve the difficulty of winning decisive victories at sea? First among those who claim the manœuvre as the fruit of their ingenuity is John Clerk, an Edinburgh merchant of scientific and literary tastes. Retiring

from business at forty-five he bought the estate of Eldin, and here wrote his "Essay on Naval Tactics," a book of manœuvres which he hoped "would lead to breaking the enemy's line, to overwhelming a part of it, and compelling the rest to close action or ignominious flight". The "Essay" was privately printed in 1782, but could not possibly have reached Rodney's hands in time. Moreover there is nothing in Clerk of Eldin's book that bears the slightest resemblance to Rodney's manœuvre.* The real author was Albemarle. Modern research has proved conclusively not only that the manœuvre was first thought of in the days of the old Dutch wars: but that it had never been quite forgotten. It had fallen into desuetude no doubt and, when used by Rodney, was not performed in the manner that Albemarle intended. But that Albemarle intended to throw the enemy into confusion by passing through their line is as indisputable as the Postulates of Euclid.

Why then had a manœuvre, apparently so effective, been allowed to fall into desuetude? Why had it to wait a hundred years before finding an exponent? It might reasonably be argued that the manœuvre was effective because it had slumbered a hundred years. Admirals had ceased to use it. Therefore, when revived, it came as a novelty. But there is another reason. Albemarle's device was intended for the advantage of a fleet operating from to-leeward; and so long as the aggressor was obliged to tack, the defender might parry his move. Rodney was to leeward at first, but he did not perform the manœuvre until a trick of the wind gave him an unexpected advantage. The more carefully the battle is examined, the more obvious it becomes that the entire movement was unpremeditated. When the battle opened Rodney had no more notion that he was going to perform it than the French had. That of course was no disadvantage to him: on the contrary he could not have desired a happier chance. Instant in decision he saw an opportunity and seized it with exactly the same daring and temerity with which Hawke dashed into Quiberon Bay.

* Clerk is dealt with here in rather summary fashion. His book was really of great importance, but at a later time. His theories were carefully studied by naval officers between this war and the next. Nelson studied it closely and based upon it his Trafalgar memorandum.

Where then lay the superiority of Rodney's manœuvre at The Saints over Mathews' at the battle of Toulon? Solely in the measure of success. For prescience Rodney's reputation must stand by the Battle of Martinique. When he broke the enemy's line on 12th April he threw caution to the winds. His unexpected lead would have confused those that fought with him at Martinique; but since those days Rodney's stern discipline and the gentler tutelage of Hood had made of the British fleet a different instrument. It did not require instructions. It required merely to be put alongside of the enemy. After that, a nod or a wink, it mattered not.

Here of a certainty lies the importance of the whole battle. Rodney was a conservative, a tory in tactics as in politics. He believed in instructions and invented new ones. He was a precisian, a formalist. He loved method, order, and arrangement. Yet in the crisis of his life and of Britain's fate he ran counter to all that was most characteristic of him, and played for him a reckless game, because it was beyond all doubt the right game to play. If then Rodney, the conservative, admitted that battles cannot be fought and still less won by rules, then indeed had the time arrived for rules to be abandoned. "Breaking the Line" was not a panacea for all evils. It was a notification to all the world that henceforward Britain would fight upon the sea not according to prescribed modes but by freer and more enlightened methods which would doubtless in time find their proper means of expression.*

Rodney lived for ten years after the battle of The Saints. It is much to be feared that these years were not so reposeful as they should have been. The St. Eustatius claimants hammered at his door and Rodney paid them out of his pensions. When the end came he was living not in affluence but in "honourable poverty". And then there was his inveterate enemy the gout. Early in 1792, while on a visit to his son Colonel Rodney, who lived at the corner house of Hanover Square and Princess Street, he

* No better proof of this can be found than the fact that never again was Rodney's manœuvre employed. Even if the enemy could have been induced to join issue on opposite tacks, the wind could not have been trusted to veer four points when required.

was attacked with repeated paroxysms, which yielded however to the treatment of Sir Walter Farquhar. On 20th May he was suddenly seized with spasms. Sir Walter was summoned. "I hope, my dear lord," he said, "you feel yourself better." "I am very ill indeed," replied Rodney, and sinking back on his pillow died without a sigh or a struggle in the seventy-fourth year of his age.*

Any study of Lord Rodney's life brings to the surface those stern qualities which made of him the Cromwell of the fleet. But, like Cromwell, the Admiral was very loving and tender to the members of his own family. He was devoted to his daughters. Even when his hands were most gouty, he never failed to write to them. In times of grave anxiety, even amid the clash of arms, he turned gaily to discuss the attractions of Brighton, or the eccentricities of "Loup" the family pet. His daughters' portraits were hung up in his cabin, and very carefully removed before the great battle. "They took care of my wine in the store-room and seemed quite refreshed after their fatiguing duty. All the French officers are in love with them, especially Count de Grasse."

* His monument was the first erected in St. Paul's.

HOWE

BORN 1726—DIED 1799

Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise nor death dismay,
Picked sparingly without noise by thee, old ocean, chosen by thee,
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,
Indomitable, untamed as thee. —WHITMAN.

RICHARD HOWE came of a good old Nottinghamshire family. His grandfather Scrope sat in Parliament at the time of the "bloodless Revolution" and, giving effectual support to William III, was rewarded with a viscounty in the peerage of Ireland. Richard was the second son of the second Viscount. He was born in London on 8th March, 1726; and was educated in part at Westminster, in part at Eton. He entered the Navy at fourteen and set out in the *Pearl* with Anson to raid the southern seas. The *Pearl* weathered the Horn, but with the *Severn* was afterwards flung back to England by the hurricane.

Howe's activities were now for a time transferred to the West Indies. Here he perfected his seamanship and won a commission. In the "Forty-Five" he received command of a sloop and served with distinction off the west coast of Scotland. In the year of Culloden he received post-rank, though barely out of his teens.

In the "Seven Years' War" Captain Howe made his name familiar to every Englishman. No officer in the service, not even Keppel or Rodney, had a wider experience or seized with so sure a grasp on every opportunity. The war, it will be remembered, was opened by Boscawen's endeavour to prevent French reinforcements from reaching America. Who was it who at Boscawen's nod snapped up the enemies' ships in the Gulf of St. Lawrence? Captain Howe. Who captured the Ile d'Aix and emerged even

from the Rochefort fiasco with enhanced repute? Captain Howe. Who was singled out by Chatham to conduct his raids upon the coast of France? Captain Howe. Who led the fleet into Quiberon Bay? Who on that blustering wild afternoon first forced a French ship to surrender?

Howe's record as a captain has already come under review in the story of Admiral Hawke. It remains to speak of his services as a flag-officer. Before doing so it will be useful to consider his personal character.

The great Prussian general Von Moltke was travelling once by rail, when a junior officer entered his carriage and cheerily called out "Morning, General!" He was deterred by Moltke's silence from further speech: but on reaching his station hazarded a submissive "Good-day". Moltke, making sure that he was really gone, ejaculated snappily, "Insufferable gas-bag!" If this was taciturnity run mad, it is to be feared that Richard Howe suffered from the complaint. He was, says Horace Walpole, "as undaunted as a rock and—as silent". It was during the raids upon the coast of France in 1758 that Lord George Sackville put to him a succession of questions without eliciting a single answer. At last, losing patience, he ventured to remonstrate. But all to no purpose. The Commodore merely growled, "I don't love questions". Some men not unnaturally came to regard the silent sailor as ill-mannered. They called him surly, morose and sullen. It must be admitted that these charges were not without foundation. Howe was never a man of cheerful bonhomie. He boasted no charm of manner. If he did not like a man, he found it difficult to conceal the fact. And he was painfully shy. He could do nothing to break the chilly silence which came over him in the presence of strangers and which enhanced the embarrassment of junior officers when they first approached him. He was very tall and broad in proportion. His features were strongly marked; their expression very fierce and forbidding. His dark heavy brows gave him a harsh and terrible aspect. His manner was awkward, clumsy and ungracious.*

But this rugged and repellent exterior covered a heart of gold.

* What in another man would have passed for pleasantry had with Howe a different meaning. "There'll be a battle to-day, sure enough," ran rumour round the lower deck. "'Black Dick' has been smiling!"

Howe was in reality charitable, gentle and indulgent. He was no tyrant. He loved nothing so much as to forgive. Officers who failed in their duty once, seldom failed in their appeal to him for a second chance. It was the same with the men. But they adored him. They were not in love with eloquence, nor yet with airs and graces. In Howe they saw their ideal; one of themselves, as it were, made perfect. He symbolized their respect for justice. He exemplified their endurance, their dogged endurance, and their rigorous unswerving sense of duty. And the "Sailors' Friend," as he came to be called, never set himself upon a higher plane, as if there were one humanity for the gentle and another for the simple. After an engagement he never failed to visit the wounded: and his visits were no cursory affairs. He sat by each cot and spoke words of solace and comfort. It was then that men discovered why their commander had so well-filled a cellar, so well-stocked a cattle-pen. The fresh meat and wine were being saved not for himself but for them. Young men often think of their father as the rod of rectitude with an inexhaustible fund of kindness in reserve. They do what they can to please him and implicitly rely on him to help them in their need. Of such a kind were the relations of Howe with those who had the happiness to serve him. It has been said that he was over-indulgent. But this was not the case. The sternness of his outward bearing ensured the meekest obedience. While captain of the *Magnanime* he had cause to put back to England for supplies. On such an occasion it was customary to keep the men cooped up; for the very good reason that, if released, they would never return to their ship. Howe saw in this confinement a needless hardship. He therefore announced a fortnight's leave to the entire ship's company by watches.

Every man returned with punctuality!

Howe's bravery was as proverbial as his taciturnity. There is that unforgettable picture of him in the Bay of St. Cas, when the British army had to be taken on board and the French poured in a fusillade from beach and cliff. The rescue work seemed impossible, until Howe himself entered a boat and had himself rowed about where the hail was thickest, with crossed arms standing in the bows, unbendingly erect. It would have been as vain to dream of frightening a rock, as Horace Walpole says. His valour was not of the ordinary kind, that braces the shoulders when the bugles blow,

or whips the blood when there are wrongs to avenge. The hotter the emergency, the cooler Howe became. He was imperturbable.

There are stories that preserve and crystallize his peculiarities, his whimsical turns of speech and unalterable calm. One or two of these are authentic. Some time after Quiberon his ship was threatened with an appalling catastrophe. Howe was asleep in his cabin, when in rushed the officer of the watch and roused him rudely enough. "My Lord!" he cried, "My Lord, the ship is on fire! . . . close to the magazine! But don't be frightened, my Lord. It will soon be got under!" Howe rubbed his eyes, stifled a yawn, and slowly propping himself up on his elbow inquired in measured and dulcet tones, "Pray, sir, how does a man *feel* when he is frightened? I need not ask how he looks." On another occasion "a gale of wind on a lee-shore off the coast of France induced him to anchor. In the course of the night it blew tremendously, but Howe having made all snug with two anchors ahead went off deck to his cabin, where he took up a book; presently however, the lieutenant of the watch came down in great haste, and with a face of woe said: 'I am sorry to inform you, my Lord, that the anchors are coming home'. 'They are much in the right,' replied Howe. 'I don't know who would stay abroad such a night as this.'"

One last story, attested by many witnesses. There was a midnight storm. The hurricane smote rigging and sails. Howe did what could be done, but every moment the waves ran higher, and the winds screamed more shrilly. The vessel seemed ready to part amidships. Lord Howe retired to his cabin; to pray some thought; or conceal his forebodings. As for the rest, "they watched what the end would be". And when the end seemed as if it could no longer be delayed, when the storm was at its wildest, and nothing more (humanly speaking) could be done, one staggered to Howe's cabin to break the news to him. What was his amazement to discover his commander sound asleep!

DURING THE AMERICAN WAR

CHAPTER I. SIGNALS

About ten years after Quiberon Howe received his flag and when the American War broke out was the first British Admiral

afloat. He was given the North American station, in part for his seamanlike qualities, in part because his elder brother had died while leading Americans into battle,* and the very name of "Lord Howe" was sufficient guarantee that England still looked for a peaceful settlement. The Admiral was a close friend of Benjamin Franklin and seemed the very man to heal the breach if any one could do so. He was accordingly invested with ambassadorial powers, which he was instructed to exercise in preference to naval force.

Lord Howe accepted his mission readily and crossed the Atlantic with rosy expectations. But these were quickly dispersed. The motherland and the revolted colonies had both rated their demands too high, and both unwisely considered an unbending attitude the best way to indicate their strength and firmness. Between the two Lord Howe was powerless. He was not allowed to be generous. The Americans were flint and adamant. When he arrived, they had just issued their "Declaration of Independence" and were feeling all the sensations of a fierce exaltation. Lord Howe's placards of forgiveness were seized by Congress and edited afresh with bitter warnings against the Court of St. James's. A letter from the Admiral to his old friend Benjamin Franklin brought back upon his head a deluge of passionate rhetoric. A letter to Washington was returned unopened because it was wrongly addressed.

Peaceable persuasion failing, Howe turned to war, and made up his mind at once that his force was inadequate. It is true the Americans had no fleet. But Howe did not look at things in this way. He regarded the squadron under his command as Britain's public notification that she did not mean to be interrupted in this business she had undertaken. A fleet such as that which Saunders had taken to Quebec would have convinced the Americans that it was in vain to strive against the greatest sea-power in the world. And instead,—he had nine ships. They were not first-rates, nor yet second-rates. They were not even seventy-fours. He had six sixty-fours and three fifties! Thus was the naval arm of England made to look ridiculous. It was tempting the Powers of Europe to intervene.

All this Lord Howe stated clearly and forcibly and in good

* Howe succeeded to the family viscounty in 1758.

time. He went further. Unless his fleet could be increased, he asked to be relieved of his command. Lord Sandwich in reply found it quite impossible to send him reinforcements. He therefore gave him leave to return. But he added, "I shall consider it a great additional misfortune if we are to lose . . . your able assistance in the present critical state of our affairs". This from anyone else would have been a manly and patriotic utterance: but from a past master of political intrigue it meant: "If you come home, you will be guilty of desertion. If you stay where you are, you will be understood to accept full responsibility for any possible mishap."

Unpleasant alternatives these; but Howe quickly made up his mind. He had not the smallest intention of moving when there was danger in the air.

Danger! His anticipations were realized. The summer of 1778 brought the Comte d'Estaing with a first-class fleet of seventy-fours and eighties that outnumbered his puny force by two to one.

It would be difficult to imagine a situation of more complex difficulty. New York, the British head-quarters, called for defence. Then there was a temporary garrison at Rhode Island that demanded immediate relief. And a British army, 10,000 strong, had been removed by the Generals to the Delaware. The crisis was almost identical with that of the Chesapeake year; if anything, more complicated. To do all that England expected of him, it was necessary that Howe should be in three places at once.

He WAS in three places at once; or so at least it seemed to D'Estaing. The Frenchman made his first rush at the Delaware. Howe rescued the entire British army just a moment before he arrived. D'Estaing in a fine fury flung himself at New York. There was Howe and his absurd little fleet sitting in Sandy Hook. They were anchored in a manner which allowed every gun of their seaward broadsides to be trained on the first French ship that entered. Washington sent his ally the best of pilots. But D'Estaing would not make the attempt. He rushed off to Rhode Island.

His arrival seemed to seal the fate of the British garrison, already on the land side surrounded by Americans. D'Estaing at last was in his element. But hardly had he settled down to his

task than Howe peeped in at the door. He had found an extra ship or two, but was still no match for D'Estaing. D'Estaing desired to complete his conquest, but the British distracted him. It was impossible to ignore them, for they made open preparations to enter the roadstead and expel him! The insolence of this was too much and he put to sea. Howe made off in a great hurry and D'Estaing with the east wind in his favour made after him. Southward they flew on the same tack, Howe coolly directing his own fleet from a frigate which he kept near the enemy. He watched his chance: and just as the French acquired an impetus, the Britons doubled back towards the port.

D'Estaing endeavoured to fling himself on their rearguard as they passed him. But a storm arose to end the strife. The French ships suffered grievously and, after a vain attempt to return to Rhode Island, fell back upon Boston to refit. They stumbled and staggered into harbour; and had hardly made a survey of their damages when Howe, with all his repairing done, came to pay them a visit of inspection.

He saw that they were powerless for further mischief: and hearing that the American armies had abandoned their design, he ceased to tease his mighty opponent and returned to Sandy Hook.

The infuriated D'Estaing, as soon as he could do so, abandoned America; and sailed away to the Indies for his bouts with Barrington and Byron.

Handing over his fleet to his successor Howe returned to England. He did not expect to find the Ministry grateful. He had spoken perhaps over boldly. Yet if ever in his life he betrayed surprise, his reception afforded good occasion. Those who had tried Keppel for his life assailed him in pamphlet and lampoon for his gross mismanagement of the American campaign. "What was to be said for an officer who failed to bring the French to battle, allowed them to establish themselves in Boston and then came home in a pet!" The hirelings of Grub Street confessed themselves puzzled. Was the Admiral fetched home because he had helped the American side more than he had helped his own? Or had he been bribed by American gold into slothful inactivity?

Small wonder if Lord Howe followed Keppel into retirement

and refused again to serve his country, while the fleet was starved and neglected and the faults of the Ministry fastened on those who strove to serve their England in her need.

While Lord Howe held the command in America, he set on foot a reform the value of which it would be difficult to overestimate. This service was his first as Admiral and brought him face to face for the first time with those accumulations of wisdom, the *Fighting Instructions*. He studied them carefully, but they offended his sense of order. A man of scrupulous neatness, he had a place for everything and carried his desire to see things "shipshape" into every department of life.

The British method of signalling had always insisted that the colours used should before all things be strictly limited in number. The first essential was that the flag when hoisted should be instantly recognized. A red flag, a white flag and a blue flag, a yellow and a Union Jack were the first five requisitioned: and so long as there were no more than five messages to be signalled, for simplicity the code was ideal. But when instructions multiplied a difficulty arose. It was solved by incorporating in the system certain vantage-points in the ship: the fore-top, the main-top, the mizen-top, the ensign-staff and the mizen-peak. "One flag, one message" was still the rule: but each colour bore a separate message according to the place where it flew. Thus with five simple flags twenty-five distinct *Instructions* could be signalled, and as the original fighting code included less than twenty, the system called for no development until Lord Anson legitimized *Additional Instructions*. These multiplied rapidly. New flags were introduced. And a fresh difficulty arose.*

So long as there were less than twenty messages, one head might carry them all. But the body of the law as finally issued filled pages and pages of print. Compiled in irregular methodless fashion it baffled the longest memory; it muddled the clearest brain. Picture the turmoil and heat of battle, and the hoisting of an unfamiliar flag. What of a system which might conceivably involve a wild hunt through fifty pages?

* The old system receives illustration from the table on the opposite page.

Number.	Fighting Instruction.	Flag.	Where shown.
I	Line ahead.	Union Jack.	Mizen-peak.
IX	To go about beginning with the van.	,,	Fore-top.
X	To go about beginning with the rear.	,,	Mizen-top.
XIII	Battle.	Red.	Fore top.
XVI	Fill sails and carry on.	Yellow.	,,
XVII	After passing the enemy on opposite tack, to go about all together.	Union Jack.	,, and at Mizen-top.

Number.	Additional Fighting Instruction.	Flag.	Where shown.
XV	HAWKE'S QUIBERON MANŒUVRE. To chase, and leading ships to form while chasing.	Red with white cross.	Main-top.
XIX	VERNON'S MANŒUVRE. Closer action.	Half blue, half white.	Fore-top. *N.B.*— Under "Battle flag".
XIV	HAWKE'S FINISTERRE MANŒUVRE. When in chase to pass on disengaged side of those already engaged.	Dutch flag.	Main-top.
XXVI-XXVIII	RODNEY'S MARTINIQUE MANŒUVRE. To mass attack on a part of the enemy's line.	Spanish flag.	Fore-top.
XXXV	RODNEY'S "12 April" MANŒUVRE. Cutting the enemy's line.	Blue and yellow chequer.	,,

Howe put it aside as obsolete and replaced it by a SIGNAL BOOK. In this he gave a page apiece to every flag in use. And on each page in orderly array he marshalled the several meanings which the flag of the page might bear. It is difficult to understand why so simple an expedient had not suggested itself before. Henceforth each ship had a simple index instead of a book of riddles.

Before his method had time to meet with popular acceptance, Lord Howe returned from America and was forced into banishment. His work, however, was carried on by Richard Kempenfelt, the capable flag-captain of all who commanded the main fleet of Britain from Keppel's retirement to the time of Howe's return. Though nominally an underling, Kempenfelt was so trusted as virtually to be commander of the Channel during three momentous years. For a man of his talents he was amazingly modest. He put himself entirely at the disposal of the service which he adorned, and initiated one reform after another in the quietest way. He was above all practical, an organizer like Lord Howe. But in addition, he was the best-read man in the service. No book on any branch of his work escaped his attention, whether it was in English, French, Dutch or Spanish. He read it if he could: if he could not, he had it translated and read the translation. He wrote in a fluent and lucid style and laid his discoveries before the Admiralty, not in a hasty pushing fashion as if the whole service would be wrecked if some particular fad of his own were not adopted; but as if it were his duty to notify his superiors of any point of interest that came under his observation. His letters, which have recently been published, are a very storehouse of suggestion, and reveal him as author or advocate of a thousand and one improvements. Many of them are too technical to be dealt with here. But it was he who first recommended Divisions, daily prayer on board ship, and a uniform for men as well as officers. It was he who pleaded for copper bottoms, and the establishment of Royal Marine Artillery.

But the dearest desire of his heart was to secure the general adoption of a SIGNAL BOOK. He had no patience with the old *Instructions*. He condemned them, like Lord Howe, for their lack of arrangement. But his principal objection went deeper. He challenged them to show cause why they should not be ruthlessly destroyed for their complete inefficiency. No words

he thought were too bad for a system which times without number had tripped up those for whose assistance it was designed. What, he argued, might not have happened if Matthews had been able to signal to Lestock exactly what he required; if Keppel had been able to explain by signal his point of view to Palliser? Other examples will suggest themselves. What would not Byng have given if he had been able to prevent his zealous van from spoiling his stratagem; or Rodney if he could have applied the curb to Carkett at Martinique!

All these men would have welcomed a better system. It was Kempenfelt who evolved one.

The truth is that the *Fighting Instructions* were like candid friends, exponents of wisdom after the event. Many of the best devices were perennially useful. Hawke's, for example, at Finisterre was used by Nelson at Copenhagen. But almost every battle brought its own peculiar complication that called for original treatment. And original treatment was impossible so long as EVERY AVAILABLE SIGNAL WAS THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF SOME PARTICULAR MANŒUVRE. At the battle of Chesapeake Bay Admiral Graves was opposed by a superior French force, willing to fight but in disarray. This was a new situation. There was no *Instruction* to meet it. Graves was unduly handicapped and America was lost. Pity for him and others who missed success may well be felt by those who live in an age of wireless telegraphy.

Kempenfelt desired that a commander-in-chief should be able to speak to his captains when they were on board their own vessels as easily and lucidly as when they were assembled in his cabin. For this purpose he invented the *Numeral Code*. Perhaps it is not quite truthful to say that he "invented" it, because he certainly derived some assistance from French sources which no one but himself would have troubled to study. He certainly evolved it.

Now it is one thing to inaugurate a radical reform. It is quite another thing to secure its acceptance by any large body of conservative Englishmen. But Kempenfelt was nothing if not practical. He put aside his own pet scheme which differed hardly at all from that in use to-day, and propounded another based upon the SIGNAL BOOK which Lord Howe had issued in America.

Lord Howe was the most popular figure in the Navy with naval men and Kempenfelt himself was hardly known. Kempenfelt used sixteen flags. To each flag was allotted one page. But the various significations were no longer sorted out under each flag. The old *Instructions* were scrapped *en masse*. The flags signified sixteen numerals (**1** to **16**). Each was used in turn to give a page its number and on each individual page the whole sixteen were grouped again, allowing of sixteen entries. The masts no longer formed part of the code. Two flags were required at each hoist; and the message that these flags would convey would be such a one as "Eight,—fourteen"; that is to say "See page number **8**, and entry **14**".

The advantages of this system were three. There was the method and order which had distinguished Lord Howe's arrangement. And above and beyond this, there was a luxurious amount of elbow-room. The old body of the law (last edition) was contained in ninety-three articles which can only be described as an inextricable maze. But sixteen times sixteen gave 256 possible signals and these were logically arranged and easily found.* Last

* In his roomier code Kempenfelt restored many a useful old manœuvre which had been crowded out of the *Instructions*. Albemarle's "Order of Retreat" was included, Torrington's disposition at Beachy Head, and the various "Doubling" manœuvres that had such a vogue during the wars with the Dutch. But for interest these are eclipsed by his revival of the world-renowned scheme for *Breaking the Enemy's line in Line Ahead*. Of course Kempenfelt simply accepted Albemarle's device as it stood. He did not invent it, or modify it, or thrust it before the notice of a curious world. But it does help to explain his reputation among the sailors of his day, when it is remembered that long before the "Twelfth of April" he had foreseen the possible usefulness of Rodney's plan and included it in his code.

Besides reviving old manœuvres Kempenfelt added at least one of his own, a new disposition of first-class importance. This was a novel "Order of Sailing". The old order will hardly bear explanation. Here are the actual words: **The fleet is divided into six columns, two for the van, two for the centre and two for the rear. Each commander is in the middle, ahead and to leeward of his two columns. The commanders ranged upon the two close-hauled lines have their squadrons astern of them upon two lines parallel to the direction of the wind: the first ships of each column being with respect to the commander of their squadron the one on his starboard, the other on his larboard quarter.** The conversion of this "Sailing Order" into the "Line Ahead" often consumed several hours.

Kempenfelt introduced Lines Ahead sailing abreast of each other; two

but not least: the introduction of a numeral code, however imperfect, was bound to lead in time to one as near perfection as earthly things can reach, to such a one as Kempenfelt dreamed of from the first with ten flags for the ten digits and relays of each, so that if a Dutch flag represented 9, three Dutch flags would represent 999, and four of the same 9999,—a system that would include all the devices that the wit of man could devise and half the words in the dictionary; to say nothing of the alphabet for spelling anything omitted.

The creation of the SIGNAL BOOK constitutes for Kempenfelt a secure title to fame. The introduction into European countries of the Arabic numerals did not do more for the progress of mathematics than the new code for the handling of fleets at sea. Let the modern reader compare if he will the opening of the Battle of Martinique and the opening of the Battle of Trafalgar. Let him picture Rodney with a great manœuvre at the point of fruition, powerless to do anything, even to suggest to Carkett that he was ruining the hope of a life; and then let him picture that familiar scene on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*. "If your Lordship will permit me to substitute '*expects*' for '*confides*' it will be sooner completed, because '*expects*' is in the vocabulary and '*confides*' must be spelled." *

It did not inevitably follow that because Kempenfelt had based his code upon something similar in the work of Lord Howe that therefore it would find universal acceptance. But in the spring of 1782 came the great Government crisis. Minorca was lost and Lord North resigned. Lord Sandwich disappeared. Keppel was called to the Admiralty. Howe was put in command of the Channel Fleet † and chose Kempenfelt to serve with him. The combination was most opportune. Kempenfelt laid his work before Howe and together they issued the SIGNAL BOOK in its

lines if the fleet were small, three if the fleet were large. This method not only saved time and made for simplicity; but it provided a scheme on which were based Duncan's battle-array at Camperdown and Nelson's at Trafalgar.

* See below p. 325. Nelson's last signal was **253** (England), **269** (expects), **863** (that), **261** (every), **471** (man), **958** (will), **220** (do), **370** (his), **4** (d), **21** (u), **19** (t), **24** (y).

† At the same time the King was pleased to recognize the value of Lord Howe's previous services by conferring upon him a peerage of the United Kingdom in addition to his Irish Viscounty.

earliest working shape. During the next twelve years Howe carried on "Kempy's" work, emending, correcting, improving the code, and at the same time by the continued success of his campaigns and the brilliance of his final victory popularizing it among the service at large.

CHAPTER II. THE RELIEF OF GIBRALTAR

October, 1782

Lord Howe returned to his labours just as the glad tidings were received of Rodney's victory at The Saints. The West Indies were saved. But on this side of the Atlantic affairs were still critical: for there was still no Mediterranean fleet and Gibraltar seemed likely to follow Minorca. One remedy remained. Lord Howe must take for relief of the Rock Britain's main fleet from the Channel.

As he was making his preparations, the country was suddenly plunged into mourning by a terrible calamity.

It was Thursday, 29th August. Portsmouth was at its busiest. Not very far from Portsea Beach lay moored the *Royal George*. The most famous ship in the fleet she was, the model and archetype of the eighteenth century, like the *Great Harry* of Tudor times and the *Dreadnought* of to-day: thrice famous since Hawke had carried her bulk amid the breakers and shoals of Quiberon. For the time she flew the flag of Admiral "Kempy".

There was not much breeze blowing, but Kempenfelt had taken care that his ship should be moored with her nose to the wind, for some repair was needed below the water-line and the *Royal George* had to be heeled upon her side. It was ten o'clock in the morning. The Admiral was in his cabin writing. The Captain was on the quarter-deck. The hands were below, and in accordance with a well-established custom their wives and their little ones were with them. The fleet would soon be moving and until sunset the night before sailing the women were allowed on board.

And then without any warning the *Royal George* settled deeply in the water, lurched over, filled, and sank. There was no time to do anything, to render any assistance. Boats were launched without delay, and a few survivors picked up. But of the 800 on board the majority were caught like rats in a trap and sank to rise

no more. The loss of so many would distinguish this among grave calamities, even if the sunken ship had been less famous than the *Royal George*. But that which brought tears to men's eyes was the death of Kempenfelt. By exceptional abilities he had risen to the highest rank. His victory over De Guichen had been the smartest action of the war. Cut off in the very flower of his age he left his country a rich legacy: but she needed the man himself and wept for him.

Toll for the brave!
Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought;
His work of glory done.

Cooper's elegy in its concluding verse set forth a general hope that the vessel would be raised and "float again full charged with England's thunder". This hope was never realized. The remains of the *Royal George* still lie embedded in the mud and above them floats the "Royal George" buoy, well known to those who know Portsmouth. It has been said that several contractors offered to salve the ship and that Government always refused. The public made their own guesses at the reason for refusal. Their curiosity was never satisfied.

To-day there is no longer need for reticence. The sinking of the *Royal George* was the outward symbol of that corrupt administration of the Navy which during the war of American Independence so nearly brought about Great Britain's downfall. The *Royal George* sank not because a "land breeze shook the shrouds". The ship was moored in a position which precluded such a chance: and the men who were working at her ribs declared that at the time of her sinking the lower-deck ports of the submerged side were quite a foot from the water. The sea moreover could not rush in at the ports because the port-lids were down. No; the *Royal George* sank for the very good reason that her bottom fell out. As wooden walls went she was not old. With proper attention she might still have lived another twenty years. But she had not received proper attention. The court martial discovered that she had not been overhauled for ten years past, that when she put to sea at the beginning of the war her company "used helps undergirding the ship," and when last seen in dock her timbers were so rotten as to offer little purchase for nails to affix the copper

sheathing. The judges after hearing evidence found "that some material part of her frame gave way which can only be accounted for by the general state of the decay of her timbers". It was impossible then in 1782 to raise the *Royal George*. Her wounds would have cried too loudly for revenge.

The tragedy, sombre as it was, was not allowed to interrupt the preparations for the relief of Gibraltar. For three years the garrison had held its own, led by stout Elliot, "Cock of the Rock".* Hitherto the enemy had placed their reliance on the pressure of famine and want: but so game was the defence that they were grown weary of the process and resolved to take the place by assault. It stood to the English as an emblem of their State,—small, defiant and wave-girt: by its capture the allies hoped to typify the ruin of England's greatness. General Elliot had at his disposal 7,000 men, eighty guns, a few mortars and howitzers and a tiny naval brigade with a gunboat or two under Captain Roger Curtis, R.N., a promising officer trained by Lord Howe.† The allies attacked both by land and sea. In the shore batteries they had 300 guns of the heaviest calibre, and an army of 40,000, six times the size of the force besieged. Over these was put the redoubtable Duc de Crillon, with laurels green from the capture of Minorca. All the experts in gunnery and fortification were summoned from Paris and Madrid. Not an engineer of note was neglected. On the side of the sea the combined fleets were fifty strong in battleships alone. Then there were nearly a hundred battering boats, gun-vessels and bomb-ketches; while a host of frigates, cutters and sloops stood ready to dash at a moment away with a message to Cadiz or Toulon.

These preparations were formidable. But still more formidable were judged to be the ten "Floating Batteries"; queer craft, specially built, unlovely and shapeless, but ponderous and huge.

* The siege began in 1779, when the Spaniards joined in the war. It lasted three years, seven months and ten days. Rodney brought the garrison relief at the beginning of 1780: and in the following year the Channel Fleet surreptitiously slipped through again, though in order to ensure success they allowed De Grasse to sail unchallenged to the Indies and so lost Tobago and imperilled the fleet of Rodney and Hood. See above, pp. 70-2.

† With characteristic generosity General Elliot always declared that for the saving of Gibraltar Captain Curtis was the man to whom His Majesty was chiefly indebted.

Their sides, it was thought, were invulnerable. Nearest the water came a scantling of green oak; behind it a wall of cork steeped in water; between the wood and cork a layer of moistened sand. And throughout these shot-proof envelopes ran ingenious little ducts and arteries which could in a moment be flooded and carry water throughout the fabric to choke a possible fire. Above board was a bomb-proof shelter made of a network of stout hempen rope supporting a thatch of soaked skins. Each monster mounted a formidable armament.

Lord Howe left England in the *Victory* on 11th September. Of all the tasks he ever performed this was undoubtedly the most difficult. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that by no man but Lord Howe could it have been undertaken with any hope of success. In less skilled hands the attempt would have been doomed to failure. To escort an innumerable convoy of big ships and little ships, some of them fast, some slow and all of them unarmed: to conduct them into the Strait with its bewildering headstrong currents: to guard them carefully with one arm, and with the other to turn out of Gibraltar Bay a first-class fleet of fifty ships and a hundred mortar boats: to land cargoes of stores, of food, of ammunition, not to speak of two regiments of soldiers: and afterwards to fling the aforesaid fleet of fifty ships out of the way a second time, collect his big ships and his little ships, his fast-sailers and slow-sailers, carry them bravely out of the Straits and protect them all the way home;—such was the task.

Lord Howe made no extravagant demands. He accepted thirty-four sail of the line and set out without a word.

It would be tedious to make extracts from the *Victory's* log; tedious to describe the shifts of wind and detail the set of the currents. Nobody but Lord Howe could properly explain how he managed the relief of Gibraltar, and though to the end he preferred to regard it as his least imperfect achievement, yet his ingrained modesty forbade him to expatiate. And so it is possible only to hint at the causes of his great success and dwell but in outline on the mode of its accomplishment.

Something must be put down to the Admiral's serene patience and unruffled calm; something more to his Signal Code. When the expedition left Spithead there were 183 sail of all sorts. The passage was none too good: the Bay of Biscay unfriendly. When

Cape St. Vincent was reached a roll-call was held. How many had lost touch? How many were missing? Not a single one. They were all there; 183 of them. This was good. But there was better to come. Lord Howe received news of the grand assault. It had been delivered on 13th September, two days after he had left Spithead. At first things had looked gloomy for the British cause. The floating batteries had come up to expectation. They had swallowed the shot in their greedy sides, or caught them in their woven roofs like balls in a tennis net. But Elliot had furnaces at every point. All through the day he pounded with red-hot shot. Towards mid-afternoon the flag-battery began to smoke and as evening darkened she burst into flame. The boats came out to her rescue: but by the light as of an immense torch the English continued their fire. They massacred the rescue parties in battalions. The red-hot balls flew through the dark leaving a scarlet trail. The batteries could not move. One after another they caught fire and one after another blew up. Gibraltar had won a breathing-space. But her defenders were almost exhausted; and over land and sea in increasing force the pitiless vultures gathered.

It was on 11th October that Howe pushed his way into the Straits. The *Buffalo* and the *Panther* led the procession, and behind them came the heavy-footed convoy, nosing each other like a herd, well-behaved for the moment, but likely enough to stampede. The wind was west and Lord Howe kept his warships nearest to it. He would then be ready to strike, whatever happened. If the allies touched the convoy he would spring at them. But the current set eastwards and in conjunction with the wind proved too strong for the unwieldy herd. Instead of turning into Gibraltar Bay, they ran on round Europa point to leeward of the Rock altogether.

This unforeseen accident, happening as it did at the crucial moment, might well have proved disastrous to the British cause. It did not prove so. Lord Howe nodded to his fighting fleet and the entire cavalcade swept on into the Mediterranean, as if in fact they had no concern at all with Gibraltar and their course was bent on a pleasure cruise to the shores of the Levant.

The allies, all expectant at Algeciras, began to feel a little uncomfortable. What were these Britons doing? They were not to be trusted ever to do the ordinary thing at sea. For what earthly

object had they brought hundreds of vessels all this way, only to run past Gibraltar when they reached it? What little plan were they concerting? Every day, every hour heightened their curiosity. At last the Commander-in-Chief gave his orders. Anchors were weighed and the great fleet came out to see what mischief the Britons were plotting at the other side of the Rock.

In a moment they were caught by wind and tide and swept away to the eastward! Away they were whirled; carried before they could stop themselves to leeward of the British. Thus was their curiosity satisfied!

It was now that the fitful wind went round from west to east. Lord Howe, who had been praying for this very chance, marshalled his clumsy but obedient band and pushed them at once into Gibraltar Bay. Then while they unloaded their welcome stores of corn and wine and beef, he drew up his ships as at Sandy Hook to prevent the allied fleet from interference. Nothing craftier had been done at sea.

The allies had to consider next what was best for them to do. The wind was with them. Should they attack? While they debated Lord Howe urged his unloading with feverish haste; and before they had arrived at a conclusion, swung his line round as if to fight them. Another ruse. He blinded them by meaningless evolutions while his patient herd of victuallers ran safely into the Atlantic and so away home. Lord Howe followed while yet the wind remained favourable and the garrison of Gibraltar after welcoming two stalwart regiments sat down to the most glorious meal they had tasted for years and years.

When the French and Spaniards grasped what had really happened, when they saw themselves duped and tricked, and their adversary nonchalantly strolling away, wrath consumed them and they rushed wildly westwards determined to strike him. Lord Howe was delighted to offer them the opportunity. So were Admiral Barrington, Captain Sir John Jervis, and Captain Duncan. Battle was engaged towards sunset on 20th October. But it was a feeble affair. The allies no sooner drew the British fire than they suddenly remembered that their mighty fleet was intended to prevent the relief of Gibraltar. But Gibraltar was relieved was it not? Then clearly there was no useful purpose served by the

wanton shedding of blood. They therefore retired and left their foes to pursue their way in peace.

Opinions upon Lord Howe's performance were singularly undivided—even in England. The French and Spanish were generous in their praise. Speaking in the House of Commons Fox convulsed his hearers by quoting a letter from Paris. "Every one in France," it ran, "is so enthusiastic, that we make sure Lord Howe will receive a court martial to ENCOURAGE him." Frederick the Great wrote in his own hand to express his admiration.

The Relief of Gibraltar formed the closing scene of the war. The new Government, recognizing the independence of the revolted colonists, rather disconcerted their other enemies. The continental Powers had joined in the war for professedly disinterested motives. On the withdrawal of America they found themselves committed to a war which, so far as their own interests were concerned, was no longer prospering. Negotiations were set on foot, and in 1783 a general pacification was signed at Versailles. To France Great Britain returned her single conquest, St. Lucia. She ceded Tobago also; and to Spain she yielded Minorca and Florida. Those who remember Ushant, the retreat of the Channel Fleet, Paul Jones, the Battle of Grenada, and the Battle of the Chesapeake will deem these easy terms. Those who revere the memory of Rodney and Hood and Kempenfelt and Howe will consider the smallest concession unworthy of the land they served.

In 1784, the year after the peace, the government of the country in a happy hour devolved upon William Pitt, the worthy son of a noble father. The moment awaited him. England needed a man.

Pitt inherited a grand self-confidence and a magnificent belief in the future of his country. But that which endeared him to the masses, as it had endeared his father before him, was his high rectitude and spotless integrity. As the elder Pitt saved his country from the perils of invasion, the terrors of rebellion and the menace of stricken fields, so the younger Pitt rescued her from the strangling burden of a money debt, from trade depression caused by loss of credit, of markets and of colonies, and from the debasement and decline of national honour occasioned by corrupt administrations.

To assist him in this tremendous task he called to his side

Lord Howe. The characters of the two had much in common; and while the statesman struggled with the exchequer, the sailor cleansed the Admiralty office. It was most unpleasant work and he was glad when all was done. But the King was grateful and conferred upon him an earldom when in 1788 he retired.

In the following year Louis XVI summoned the States General to meet at Versailles.

THE WAR OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. 1793-1802

From the capture of the Bastille in 1789 to the flight of the King in 1791 Britain was but a spectator of events in France. She watched in spell-bound fascination the ignominious return of the fugitive monarch and the raids of the mob upon his palace. She sympathized warmly with the efforts of the Emperor to rescue his relatives by force of arms. But so long as Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette remained alive she had with France no cause of quarrel.

When the Bourbons were gone it was different. The First Republic men wallowed in blood. They saw on every side, or thought they saw, the would-be restorers of monarchy. No one was safe from their suspicions. And the suspects were slain by machinery. The most enlightened patriots were jostled into the tumbrils with those who from physical weakness were powerless to subvert the State. The advocates of war were as delirious as the red-handed guardians of the "Public Safety". The armies that delivered France from an Austrian invasion were exhorted to carry the doctrines of "Liberty" into all lands; to uproot principalities and crowns; to deliver groaning peoples from the yoke of bondage.

England was dragged into the vortex whether she willed or no. In the madness of success and the lust of conquest the Jacobins resolved to swallow up the Austrian Netherlands, thrust their boundary to the Rhine, and establish Antwerp as a rival to London. England had not poured out blood and treasure at Ramillies and Oudenarde, Malplaquet and Fontenoy only to stand by now and see France's ambition of the centuries accomplished in a fever of Republican heat. She threw in her lot with a coalition which already included Austria, Prussia, Spain, Sardinia, the Two Sicilies and Holland.

THE GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE

JUNE 1, 1794

When the great war broke out, Lord Howe was the acknowledged head of the British Navy. Keppel was dead. Rodney was dead. Howe himself, sturdy though he was, was a veteran. He was nearly seventy. But he was still eager for service and received command of the main fleet. To carry his flag he chose the *Queen Charlotte*, the mightiest ship till then ever built in Britain. It was difficult to find a new honour for him. He had long since reached the very highest rank in the service. But the King granted him special permission to wear the Union Flag of Britain at the Main. His Majesty knew that he committed it to safe keeping.

The French fleet had been transformed in the name of "Liberty". The very names of the ships suggest the Parisian orgy, its delirium, its extravagance,—*Republicain*, *Patriote*, *Vengeur du Peuple*, *Jacobin*, *Mountain*, *Convention*, *Tyrannicide*, *31 May*, *Jemmappes*. The cartridges issued to the ships were made of genealogies of the old noblesse and priceless fifteenth-century manuscript, both alike procured from the sack of the Chateaux. To every ship were issued Caps of Liberty, made of tin to resist the weather. These were firmly affixed to the masthead. More ominous, upon the foc's'le at the foot of the foremast was stationed a working model of the guillotine. "Citoyens, la patrie est en danger!" The tricolour cockade resolved itself into an ensign for service afloat and was unfurled to the tumultuous singing of the Marseillaise. And fresh from the windy rhetoric of Paris clubs there came to the fleet at Brest a delegate from the Convention, Citizen Jean Bon St. André, a man that Robespierre could trust. Rumour whispered that he had been in his time an able-bodied seaman and Calvinist minister. It mattered not. He knew something about warships and had a high-pitched voice. Streaming with tricolour ribbons he stood on the poop of the *Mountain* and made known to the Citizen-Captains assembled before him the decree that was to regulate their conduct. If any Citizen-Captain should be guilty of hauling down his flag, never mind how many enemies assailed him, unless the Citizen-Captain's ship were actually sinking, with his head the Citizen-Captain should answer it.

It was to the officers, not the ship's company that the Delegate addressed his remarks. The lower ratings were in appearance disreputable. Their food was bad. They had ragged garments. They were unkempt. Requests for pay were met with the reminder that the guillotine was the only settlement for mutiny. But still the crews were good. They were picked men. They were inspired by the same feeling of nationalism which had flung the Austrian armies from France. They had before them the encouraging example of mighty victories on land. To serve under the shadow of the guillotine did them no harm. But the officers were altogether inferior to the skilled commanders who had fought with Washington. The day of the aristocrat was past. D'Estaing and many another gallant sailor had been sent to the scaffold and the fleet was dominated by men who took their tone from Jacobins and *sans-culottes*. Right thinking in politics was deemed more essential than capacity to handle a ship.

In the supply and quality of her officers England was more fortunate. Death had been busy since the American War. But at least there had been no guillotine. At the time Lord Howe took command of the Channel, British interests in the Caribbean were being safeguarded by Jervis, in India by "Billy" Cornwallis, and in the Mediterranean by Lord Hood. Then, not to speak of Duncan, who will call for separate treatment presently, there were a score of younger captains, who in the American War had found the West Indies the station for honour. One of these deserves more than passing mention, because in the coming battle he definitely found himself.

Cuthbert Collingwood was born in The Side Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne. He came of a good family more blessed with ancestry than wealth. He was educated at the local Grammar School, and if he had been allowed by circumstances to follow his own bent he would probably have adopted literature as a profession. "He had such an art of expressing himself with his pen as brings many of his letters in polish, sweetness of language and archness of humour, very close to some of the happiest compositions of Addison." But he was not consulted as to his inclinations. An uncle of his was a frigate captain and at thirteen he was sent to sea. He did not want to go. His first days aboard were days of abject misery, until a good-natured lieutenant took pity on his

loneliness and was rewarded by the youngster with a piece of cake. But if Collingwood was not born to the sea, his sterling character and deep-rooted sense of honour led him to accept conditions with uncomplaining patience and unswerving steadiness of aim. His unbending rectitude made his discipline proverbial, but though he was "about as yielding as an anchor-stock and regarded a shower of shot as much as a shower of snowflakes," he was beneath an iron exterior as tender-hearted as a school-girl. No one ever was less like the typical sea-captain of the story-books. The seamen dreaded him: yet he was gentle, meek, long-suffering and of great kindness. His bravery was transcendent; and yet of as silent a character as the ship whose deck he trod. "Another true knight of those days," wrote the author of *Henry Esmond*, "was Cuthbert Collingwood, and I think since heaven made Gentlemen, there is not record of a better one than that."

Though he lived and died at sea Collingwood never lost his homely qualities, and cared more for the sight of an English hedgerow than for all the greys and blues of ocean. Even when in command of the Mediterranean he longed for the time when he could return to his home and the garden that he loved. "Then will I plant my cabbages and prune my gooseberry trees, cultivate corn and twist the woodbine through the hawthorn hedge with as much satisfaction in my improvement as ever Diocletian had, and with the same desire and hope that the occasion never may occur again to call me back to more important but less pleasurable duties."

Kempenfelt, among his many reforms, had abolished the time-honoured custom that gave each fighting fleet three Admirals. Instead he regulated the number of flags by the number of vessels employed. So it came about that Lord Howe had under him no less than six flag-officers. His second in command was Graves of the Chesapeake, his third Sir Alexander Hood, brother of the victor of Frigate Bay.

The hostile fleets were fated not to meet in 1793. They both put to sea, and Lord Howe sought untiringly for his opponent. But it had never been the object of a French commander to fight without some clearly defined object. There was none such in 1793: and the Brest fleet proved elusive. Not that their safe procedure found any favour with the Convention. At the ter-

mination of the cruise they weeded out a batch of officers, carted them off in a tumbril and guillotined them to encourage the others. A new commander was supplied in the person of Monsieur de Villaret Joyeuse. He was a man of good family, but of pronounced Republican views, a capable officer of some experience, but promoted in a day from lieutenant to admiral.

Here then was one cause for changed tactics in 1794. There was another more potent. The excitement of Paris had spread to the provinces, and crops had been neglected. The harvest of 1793 threatened at best to be meagre. A bad season ruined it. France was face to face with famine and, to prevent a disaster of appalling magnitude, purchased in America a vast consignment of corn, valued at something like five million francs. One hundred and fifty floating granaries were expected at the beginning of 1794, and it was arranged that the main fleet should await them in the latitude of Brest some hundred leagues from the coast. To impress upon Villaret the gravity of the situation and put him in good conceit with himself Robespierre informed him that failure to conduct the corn-fleet safely into harbour would involve the loss of his head. Thus urged the Admiral lost no time. He sent forth a fleet of five forerunners as early as 10th April, and prepared himself to follow with speed.

Lord Howe put to sea on 2nd May with more than thirty sail of the line. It would have been well if he had been given a free hand; but he was hampered by a burden of merchantmen for whose safety he was held responsible. Six ships left his flag to carry the trade as far as Finisterre. They could not properly be spared, and he saddled them with strict injunctions to return to Ushant without fail at latest by 20th May. Peeping into Brest he was gratified to find that the Frenchmen did not out-number him. But blockade was out of the question. Though ignorant of the advance squadron that had sailed in April, he knew of the invaluable corn-ships expected; and if he kept station off Brest two things were certain. The French fleet would not and could not come out: and the grain would put in elsewhere. He meant to have one or the other, and with his usual cunning advanced to the west along the forty-seventh parallel; along the avenue, that is, by which the American ships and the fleet of Brest must sail to meet each other.

Nothing of note happened. The weather was inclined to be foggy, and on 19th May the British were back at Ushant to be ready for the Finisterre squadron due there on the following day.

Brest was empty!

The hostile fleets had passed in the fog; so close indeed that without the fog they must have run into each other, so close that the French had heard the bells and drums that their foemen sounded as signals: and, hearing them, had blessed their good fortune and made all sail to the west.

Howe did not rail at chance. That was not his way. He stayed not a moment. He stayed not for the six from Finisterre. He set every inch of cloth he could carry and dashed off in pursuit. There was one man in the *Charlotte* who got no rest in the next few days. Edward Codrington, afterwards the famous victor of Navarino, was at that time Howe's flag-lieutenant. The Admiral vowed that he had the eyes of Argus and could see like a cat through the dark. Hour after hour by day and night Codrington stood at his post, glass in hand, scanning the horizon. He came below for food occasionally, but so tired was he that he fell asleep between mouthfuls, and his meals would never have been finished had it not been for his companions, whose cries of "Signal!" never failed to rouse him, though all else failed.

At six o'clock in the morning on Wednesday, 28th May, the enemy were sighted. In number they were twenty-six of the line, exactly equal to Lord Howe's fleet. The weather was bad, the wind from south-west squally, and the sea rough. The enemy were some ten miles to windward, but such had been the ardour of the pursuit that the British were farther from Brest than their opponents. This proved very mystifying to Villaret, who thought he saw before him his own advanced squadron with the convoy of corn in tow. He stood to look at them: and lost some ground to leeward before he discovered his mistake. Then he hauled to the wind and made off. He was in for a race and had an excellent start.

Lord Howe, ready for all emergencies, had arranged a flying squadron of six speedy seventy-fours. Their leader, with the flag of Admiral Pasley, was a famous ship, or destined soon to become so; christened by the First Lord "*Bellerophon*," rechristened by the tars "old *Billy Ruff'n*". She held her exalted rank by virtue of

a rare achievement. She had been wrecked at the beginning of the campaign, losing foremast, main-topmast, bowsprit and beakhead. Lord Howe had her taken in tow. But the tow-rope quickly grew slack and the derelict in a very few hours passed her draught-horse in a canter. Lord Howe felt certain that his fliers would prove faster than the slowest of the French, and commissioned them to hang on Villaret's skirts and hold him back till the rest came up. The idea was not new. In fact Villaret seems to have anticipated it; for he stationed in his extreme rear a magnificently stalwart vessel, the *Révolutionaire* of 120 guns. Now the *Révolutionaire* was just one of those ships which could only be properly fought by one of her own size. She was big enough to hold her own with all six of the flying squadron, even if they were able to attack her together; and this was extremely unlikely.

The British under all the sail they could carry pressed forward in feverish haste, and at three o'clock in the afternoon the first of them opened fire. Concerted action proved impossible. But the *Bellerophon* ran under the Frenchman's stern and raked him mightily: then drew up alongside and for eighty minutes fought without losing a man. At last bringing down his mizen she checked his career. And when at length she stayed to breathe, the dainty *Audacious* stepped into the ring and at seven the Frenchman bore up. But the little *Audacious* would not let him go. Clinging to the port quarter of her adversary she hammered away at him and was carried far from her friends. At ten o'clock the *Révolutionaire* had lost 400 men. She no longer carried colours. She had been effectually silenced: though her diminutive antagonist had all that she could do to stagger home. The *Révolutionaire* could not stagger home. She rolled about in abject misery until, a mastless hulk, she was found by a friend and tugged with her wounded to Rochefort. She had fought a good fight. She had lost her captain and three lieutenants next in seniority. But this did not prevent Robespierre from imprisoning the survivors. Had they not conspired against the Public Safety!

Net result of the first day's fight: the English had driven a three-decker from the field at the price of a seventy-four. They had sacrificed a pawn and taken a queen.

All night long the British pushed on. The men slept between the guns, and Lord Howe himself was scarcely more comfortable.

When a ship was cleared for action, the wooden bulkheads of the Admiral's cabin together with all his furniture were carried below to minimize the danger from splinters. On the present occasion a single chair was left and the Commander-in-Chief made the best he could of it. When the morning of the 29th dawned the weather was still bad with a heavy head sea. The enemy was still to windward but no longer out of reach. Lord Howe set to work at once and, after a restless morning of turnings and twistings, hoisted the signal for *Dividing the Enemy from To-leeward*. If all the ships had been as magnificently handled as the *Charlotte* a grand measure of success might have been attained. But the manœuvre had always been regarded as extremely difficult. A skilful enemy could parry it: and Monsieur Villaret was skilful. Above all it was far from being an ideal day. The van in answer to signals — no longer, be it noted, unintelligible — made the attempt with a fine show of bravery, but they could make nothing of it. Then it was that the *Charlotte* gave a new lead. Her station, as was customary, was in the middle of the line and therefore if she tacked and stood through, she could only hope at best to cut off the tip of the enemy's tail.

But she did it!

She cut through Villaret's line five ships from the end of it. The "*Billy Ruff'n*" who since her last exploit had had a little time for patchwork, followed her of course: and another plucky creature, the *Leviathan*, scrambled through to make a third. It was hot work; but Howe fired both to starboard and larboard as he cut his way through to the wind. He manned all his guns, every one of them: opened his lower-deck gun-ports to leeward even though the waves were what they were. Codrington at work among the thirty-twos was knocked down by a recoil, and raising himself upon his elbow only just kept his head above water! But it was done at last: the great feat accomplished. The enemy's line was for once divided from the leeward position in exactly the manner intended by its earliest advocate. The *Leviathan* was hurt as she squeezed her way through, but the great-hearted *Queen Charlotte* looked after her and yet found time to fling herself round on the same course as the French and signal to the rest what to do.

The last two or three ships of the enemy were surrounded. In

a very short time they were battered out of all resemblance to sail of the line and Villaret was called upon to make a momentous choice. Should he sacrifice three ships and retain his place in the wind, or should he fling away the weather gauge and rescue his broken ships? He played the man and chose the latter course.

Here then was Lord Howe, all but seventy years of age, playing the great game with all the verve and abandon with which he had fought at Quiberon thirty-five years before. In two days he had forced an enemy against his will to fight, had robbed him by an intricate manœuvre of the advantage of the wind, and put to flight four of his ships, one of them a three-decker. By his own calculation he could now match his twenty-five ships with a force of twenty-two.

There now came a pause in the strife, for the fog descended on the 30th and rendered anything but groping impossible. Whenever the mist grew thin or lifted for a while, Codrington's eyes peered through the curtain. But without his aid Lord Howe felt pretty certain that Villaret would edge off before the wind. Sure enough he did so. But it was not that he hoped to avoid a battle. He knew that sooner or later the precious corn-ships must pass over the scene of the recent conflict, and by shifting the battle-ground he hoped to save the convoy and incidentally—his head. In this he succeeded and for the excellence of his management Fortune rewarded him. For in the very thick of the fog he ran into the arms of the little April fleet whom he could never have hoped to find by searching. By this lucky chance he received exactly four ships to replace the four he had lost.

At midday on the 31st the fog lifted, and throughout the British fleet it was generally believed that battle would be engaged immediately. But with his customary coolness Lord Howe preferred to wait. He had an epoch-making battle before him, and he was not going to have it crowded into the latter half of the day. He preferred to wait till the morrow. The enemy couldn't escape.

The First of June was a radiant golden day, perfect in every respect with a gently rolling sea and just the right amount of wind slightly to the west of south.

It was Sunday.

The British were at first a little disappointed to find that after

all their efforts they were still in a minority of one. They consoled themselves with the reflection that but for the successes of Wednesday and Thursday they would have been in a minority of five. Early in the morning the ships began to shorten the interval between them and the French. But before the first shot was fired Lord Howe had a little surprise for his fleet, very characteristic of himself and well calculated to put every one in a good humour. As eight bells sounded he stayed his fleet, hove to just out of range, and ordered every one to make a jolly good breakfast and take it leisurely. There was plenty of time.

Little prepared as they were for this sudden stoppage, the French were very much less prepared for the plan which Lord Howe had formed for their final discomfiture.

The French preferred to fight from the leeward position. They liked to open fire from long range and cripple their enemy's masts and spars: for they could bear up as their foe advanced and so maintain their distance, till the crippling process was complete. The British called this "running away," not wholly without reason. But they were powerless to prevent it: for if they took the leeward station themselves, the French in the wind could refuse to fight. What then was the remedy? Lord Howe discovered it. His plan was to take each station in turn; the windward to give him the choice of time at which to open battle, the leeward to prevent the enemy from choosing their time to go.

This double advantage he proposed to secure by cutting the hostile line at all points from to-windward and engaging on the opposite side. [MAP. FIG. 1.]

Simple as it was, this brilliant manœuvre offered many advantages. By splitting the enemies' line to fragments it robbed their Commander-in-Chief of even the shadow of control. And if in slanting fashion the attacking force ran down, they could use both port and starboard broadsides: alternately as they engaged from to-windward and to-leeward, both together as they cut the line. Best of all, this evolution triumphed over almost every other devised before, because it could be parried not by counter-evolutions, but by weight of gun-fire alone.

It would have been too much to expect that every ship of the attacking side could make sure of piercing the enemy's line, even when running free. Lord Howe did not expect it. But he did

FIG. 1

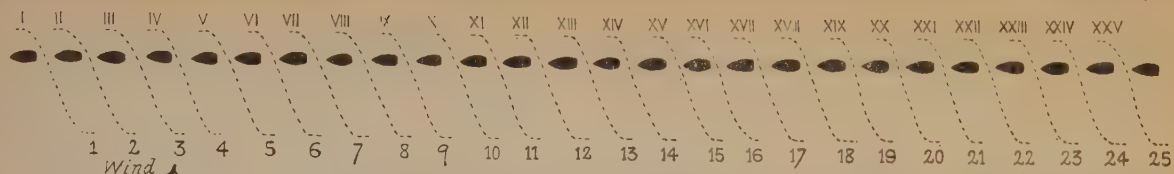
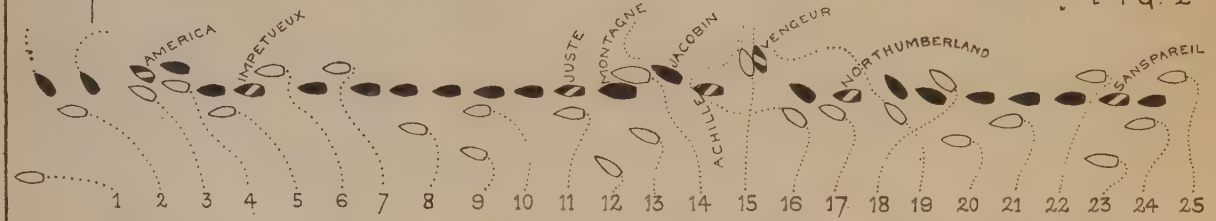

I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX X XI XII XIII XIV XV XVI XVII XVIII XIX XX XXI XXII XXIII XXIV XXV
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
Wind

FIG. 1.—Lord Howe's projected attack. Breaking the enemy's line at all points. The black figures represent the French ships. The Arabic numerals show the starting-places of the British: the Roman numerals their fighting stations.

FIG. 2.—The Actual battle.

Captured ships are shown thus

FIG. 2



2 BELLEROPHON, Admiral Pasley.
5 ROYAL SOVEREIGN, Admiral Graves.
7 DEFENCE, Capt. Gambier.
10 BARFLEUR, Admiral Bowyer; Capt. Collingwood.
11 INVINCIBLE, Capt. Pakenham.
14 QUEEN CHARLOTTE, Lord Howe; Capt. Sir Roger Curtis.
15 BRUNSWICK, Capt. J. Harvey.
18 QUEEN, Admiral Gardner.
19 RAMILLIES, Capt. H. Harvey.
22 ROYAL GEORGE, Admiral Sir Alexander Hood.

look forward with confidence to a tale of prizes equal to the number of his own ships that succeeded in breaking through.

At half-past eight the advance was resumed. There was no wild rush, but rather a measured catlike approach. The *Charlotte* sauntered and dawdled along under single-reefed topsails. "We bore down on them as if calmly coming to an anchor." Lord Howe was supremely anxious that his scheme should not be spoiled by misguided haste. His signals fluttered busily and now this vessel made more canvas, or that one backed a topsail that the alignment might be as perfect as that of an infantry regiment on a parade-ground inspected by the King. The secret of Lord Howe's success lay in his amazing equanimity when every one else was excited.

He was satisfied at last and shut the signal-book with a snap. "Now, gentlemen," said he, "no more signals! I look to you to do the duty of the *Charlotte* in engaging the French Admiral. If you can lock the yard-arms together, so much the better. The battle will be sooner decided." At nine-thirty the ships were within range, and it remained to see who would break through.

The first failure was the *Cæsar*, "number one" of the British line. [MAP. FIG. 2]. In justice to Lord Howe it is only fair to say that he suspected the *Cæsar* or rather her captain and would like to have substituted another ship. From goodness of heart he relented at the entreaty of his flag-captain, the same Sir Roger Curtis who had made his reputation at Gibraltar. The *Cæsar* threw her main topsail aback and began to engage from to-windward when she was still more than a quarter of a mile from the place where she should have been. Lord Howe touched his captain on the shoulder. "Look, Curtis," he said. "There goes your friend. Who is mistaken now?"

But the *Cæsar* was an exception.

The first ship to break through the enemy's line was number seven counting from the van. This was the *Defence* and well was she named, for she was hotly engaged on both sides and yet held her own, though her spars were all of them shot away and in time the masts followed. Her captain was James Gambier, well known in the fleet as a man of sincerely religious life and devotional piety. He lived to become an Admiral, to startle Europe by cap-

turing the entire navy of Denmark, and to win for himself a peerage of the United Kingdom.

Still greater things were done in the rear. Number twenty-two, the fourth from the end, carried out Lord Howe's intentions to a nicety. She burst through the line, engaged from to-leeward and fired every one of her hundred guns with crushing telling effect. But then twenty-two was a *Royal George* with the flag of an Admiral Hood. The conjunction of names was bound to prove irresistible.

As the *Charlotte* worked her way into battle Howe engaged more than one ship with his starboard batteries as a preliminary to serious work. But the principal object that he kept in view was the port quarter of the *Mountain*. The *Mountain* was the pride of the republican fleet and carried Villaret's flag. She was christened in honour of the bloodthirsty party dominant in the National Assembly. But the name fitted her even when taken literally, for she displaced 800 tons of water more than the *Charlotte* herself. It was Howe's intention to pierce the enemy between the *Mountain* and her next astern, the *Jacobin*. Both ships were quick to see his purpose and resolved to frustrate it. The *Mountain* threw her sails aback, the *Jacobin* shook out her reefs. The distance between them was sensibly diminished; and to outward seeming the English ship must engage on the side of her approach.

Lord Howe liked a good look at things. He mounted upon the poop and there he stood throughout the battle. As he viewed things from there he saw no reason to change his mind. But in this he differed from the master, who pointed out the imminent risk of a collision. Howe told him sharply to mind his own business. "Hanged if *I* mind, if you don't," said the blunt old seaman, not meaning to be heard. "We'll go close enough to singe our whiskers!" "That's a fine fellow," Lord Howe remarked as the master went back to the wheel.

And now the *Charlotte* was up with the French. There was just a narrow sea-lane astern of the *Mountain*. Lord Howe pushed into it. Someone had to give way, and the *Jacobin* put her helm aport. This relieved the tension for a moment. It set Lord Howe at liberty to go ahead. He went ahead. He pressed so close to Villaret's ship that the great tricolour on her ensign staff brushed against the *Charlotte's* shrouds. Now was the

moment. The *Charlotte* spoke; delivered the briefest and most effective anti-Jacobin oration. The entire larboard broadside double-shotted was poured at touching distance into the *Mountain's* stern. The stern of a wooden fighting ship was her weakest part. Inwardly the effect was terrible. The captain went down and 300 men. Outwardly there was a gaping wound big enough to row the Admiral's barge through.

But even as she delivered this smashing blow the *Charlotte* was again in danger of collision. The *Jacobin*, when she ported her helm, had done so not to leave the line but to move across the *Charlotte's* bows. Could she but push on and lie to leeward of the *Mountain* she would forestall the British flagship and usurp her coveted place. The *Charlotte's* bowsprit almost touched the *Jacobin's* mizen chains. There seemed but a single thing to be done. This time Lord Howe must give place. It is safe to say that nine out of ten Commanders would have done so,—if they could have avoided the collision.

Lord Howe did not! With lightning decision he jammed his helm hard to starboard.

The *Charlotte* answered her master's will, and gracefully shouldered her dainty way between the two clumsy *sans-culottes*.

An amazing piece of dexterous manipulation, and yet it was the *Charlotte* who should have felt uncomfortable. On one side a ship of eighty guns, on the other of 120. Theoretically the Frenchmen should have had things all their own way! In practice the *Charlotte* fought both at once, seemed indeed to prefer fighting both at once. Her broadsides vied with each other. Larboard pounded and pummelled the *Mountain* till the *Mountain* lapsed into silence. Starboard battered and hammered the *Jacobin* till she fell away exhausted. So the two republicans ran for it.

And what said the Deputy? Where was Jean Bon St. André? According to the story, as the English approached, he summoned the men of the *Mountain* and striking a Dantonesque attitude warned them in sibilant crescendos that the eye of the "Terror" was upon them. But when the *Charlotte* began hammering as pitilessly as a September mob destroying the Tuileries, he slid down the steps of the poop, scuttled across the quarter-deck, plunged down the hatchway and buried his shame in the hold.

As for Lord Howe, in his two-handed struggle he had suffered severely aloft. But to console the *Charlotte* for the loss of two prizes, he permitted her to take the *Juste*.

Next astern of the *Charlotte* in the English order came the *Brunswick*. She attempted first to cut the French line between the *Jacobin* and *Achille*. This proved impossible, and Captain John Harvey decided to run under the *Achille's* stern. But the *Achille* and the ship in her wake, the famous *Vengeur du Peuple*, played against him the same defence as the *Jacobin* and *Mountain*. The *Achille* hung back and the *Vengeur* came on. They successfully closed the interval and looked to the *Brunswick* to accept the situation and engage them from to-windward. The *Brunswick* was sailing north-westerly. If she luffed quickly she could avoid a collision. But Captain John Harvey sought a collision. He suddenly put his helm hard aport and crashed with a noise of thunder into the side of the *Vengeur du Peuple*. The *Brunswick's* starboard anchors grappled the *Vengeur* with relentless fingers and the two ships paid off in a grim embrace of death, running before the wind. "Shall I cut the *Brunswick* free?" inquired the master of the Captain. "No! we've got her now," said Harvey, "and we'll stick to her."

The *Brunswick* had hoped after breaking through to engage the *Achille* with her larboard broadside. For this reason she had not opened her leeward ports: for there was always a chance that they would swallow at a gulp enough water to swamp the ship. Now of course she required her starboard thirty-twos, and yet with the *Vengeur* crunching alongside it was impossible in the usual way to open them.

The lower battery rammed a charge home and blew their own lids off!

The gunners made the most of their nearness to the enemy.* They pushed their wedges home and depressed their guns to the uttermost: or they removed the coins altogether and pointed the muzzles up like howitzers. Upwards and downwards through the *Vengeur's* sides the shot ploughed their splintering furrows.

* Throughout the fight, wherever opposing ships ground together, Lord Howe's fleet enjoyed an inestimable advantage, for the French still served their guns with wooden-handled spoons and sponges and rammers and worms. The English had substituted flexible handles.

The duel had been in progress an hour when the *Achille* came up to take a hand. She had already been closely engaged and had lost her foremast and main. But the *Brunswick's* preoccupation provided the opportunity she wanted, and she dragged herself up on the opposite side to that on which the *Vengeur* fought. The men were enthusiastic. Arming themselves with axes, cutlasses and pistols they swarmed along the gangways and hung like bees from the ratlines ready to board. "Vive la Republique!" they cried with patriotic fervour.

The "Brunswickers" saw the *Achille* approach; and busy though they were, half of the gun-crews ran over to port and loaded with cross-bar. Then at point-blank range they fired. The *Achille's* boarding-parties were grouped in masses, and in masses they fell. Down came the mizen too. Its wreck encumbered the engaged side; and the *Achille*, now a sheer hulk, tried to set her sprit-sail and escape.* But the "Brunswickers," warming to their work, loaded quickly and captured a prize even as they wrestled in a death-embrace.

For it must not be supposed that the *Vengeur* was an ordinary antagonist. She was fighting in tremendous style from foc's'le and poop and fighting-tops. With small arms she swept the *Brunswick's* quarter-deck; with langridge she shattered spars and shredded sails. If the *Brunswick* was working her will below, the *Vengeur* was doing as she liked above. Captain Harvey received his first wound in the hand. His sword-hand was shattered: but he tied the pieces together and continued to order the fight. Presently he was hurled off his feet by a splinter and received a crippling bruise in the back. He picked himself up, swayed, staggered, found he had retained the use of his legs and continued to order the fight. At last he received a wound in the arm that made it impossible for him to keep the deck. He went below to have the limb removed, but turning at the hatchway he stifled his agonies and called out, "Remember, men: the colours of the *Brunswick* must never be struck!"

On went the fight with undiminished fury. But when the two ships had been locked together for three hours, they suddenly swung apart from one another; and at that very moment a fresh

* The sprit-sail was almost invariably furled before action. This was in part to avoid fouling, in part to reserve a last means of retirement.

diversion occurred. Captain Henry Harvey* in the *Ramillies*, as if from afar he had seen or guessed his brother's difficulties, now emerged from the battle-smoke to effect a rescue. "Behold!" observed an onlooker, "how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to fight together in unity!"

The *Vengeur* was quite incapable of sustaining the fresh attack of the *Ramillies*. As for the *Brunswick*, she had lost her mizen and her bowsprit. Her mainmast tottered. Her foremast swayed. Her running rigging and standing rigging had all been shot away. All her yards had been smashed. All her sails had been shattered. Three times she had been on fire. She had lost her starboard gallery. Her hull was riddled. Her casualty list was long and horrible. But the spirit of gameness never flagged, and to the end the "Brunswickers" fought as if they enjoyed themselves. The ship had as her figurehead a terminal of the Duke of Brunswick with a laced hat on. The hat was struck off by a shot in the battle: whereupon the crew, thinking it a degradation that a prince of the blood should remain uncovered in the presence of republicans, sent a deputation to request that Captain Harvey would be pleased to order his servant to give them his laced hat to supply the loss. "The Captain with great good humour complied, and the carpenter nailed it on the Duke's head, where it remained till the battle was finished."

It will be seen from the experience of the *Charlotte* and the *Brunswick* that it was no child's play to break through the French. But the success of those who did break through brought about a general mêlée, and this was just what the French detested, what the English most desired. In the thick of it some of the finest work was done by those who for sundry reasons were unable to fight from to-leeward. Chiefest among such was the *Bellerophon*. She was handicapped by the defection of the *Cæsar* and obliged to fight two enemies at once. The *Cæsar* indulging in long-distance firing, occasionally hit the *Bellerophon*. Admiral Pasley bore himself as he had done on the 28th and 29th May; but at 10.50 his leg was smashed and he went below to have it amputated. The sailors, who regarded him with great affection, crowded round with rough condolences. "Never mind my leg, lads," he said. "Look after my Flag." Look after it! Of course they

* He afterwards conquered Trinidad for the Empire.

did. And they put the *Trajan* to flight at last and the *Æolus* as well.

Admiral Graves in the *Royal Sovereign* fought the *Terrible*, a 120 gun ship, like the *Mountain*. He brought down her main and mizen. She bore away, exhausted by the impetuosity of his fire; and as she yawed Graves raked her repeatedly with dire effect. Had he been to leeward he must have captured her.

Admiral Bowyer, a veteran hero of the American war, had his flag in the *Barfleur*, Hood's flagship at Frigate Bay. He was worthy of the ship: and if he fell, was there not here beside him his trusty Captain? As they stood together on the quarter-deck at the beginning of the fray the gentle Collingwood's thoughts winged their way homewards. "I observed to the Admiral that about that time our wives were going to church, but that I thought the peal we should ring about the Frenchman's ears would outdo the parish bells." Bowyer was wounded early in the fight. His leg was shattered as Pasley's was. Collingwood caught him as he fell and afterwards took the *Barfleur* into action and rang the peals himself. Bowyer had news of the battle brought to him, and when he heard how well it went he was so delighted that he was like to have done himself an injury, until Collingwood shut him up in his cabin and forbade all but the doctor to approach him.

Next astern of the *Barfleur* was the *Invincible*. Her Captain, Pakenham, fought like a swashbuckler, and garnished his blows with tremendous oaths and hilarious mirth. He was an Irishman and the jester of the fleet. He fought a Frenchman till he silenced her and then bawled down his trumpet: "Hi, there! Have you surrendered?" "Non, monsieur, non," came the reply. "Then damn you, why don't you go on firing?" he inquired in an aggrieved tone. Presently he came across the *Defence* with not a mast to her name. He hailed the Puritan Gambier down his trumpet: "Well, Jimmy, you're pretty well mauled. But never mind, Jimmy, whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

The battle to all intents was over shortly after one o'clock. By that hour Villaret's force had had enough, and those that had sails to carry them bore up and fetched a safe distance to leeward. But nearly half the republican fleet was incapable even of running. Nine ships had not a single mast standing, and three had but one apiece. The British vessels best able to move began now to reap

their harvest: and seven of Robespierre's ships never sailed home any more, the *Juste*, *Achille*, *Vengeur*, *Sanspareil*, *Northumberland*, *America*, and *Impetueux*. What became of the other five wrecks and why were they too not taken? They should have been taken. But Villaret was prompt in organizing a definite scheme of rescue. He called to his flag all ships that could still make sail. There were perhaps some ten of them. And he drew them up in line ahead and planted them pluckily to windward of the cripples, so that behind a barrier the frigates could work with hawsers and cables and tow-ropes. Great praise is due to him for this masterly coolness in a moment of bewildering misfortune.

It was at this particular moment that the *Queen* let the Frenchmen know who it was whose flag she carried. It was Gardner who fought so well at Grenada and backed up Rodney so nobly at The Saints, an Admiral now, if you please. He had fought in splendid fashion the whole morning through. He had been one of the first to break the French line, but had suffered considerable damage aloft. In consequence he had drifted more to leeward than most; and when Villaret's rescue party came along, they saw to their delight that they could cut him off. Cut him off! They must be forgiven for thinking this. They had not been through the American War and studied his broadside power.

Gardner engaged the lot of them; from first to last the ten of them: fought an entire battle on his own account, and seemed sorry when they felt obliged to go.

Villaret's work of rescue might have been frustrated altogether if the same amount of organizing power had been shown on the English side. Considerable initiative was shown by individuals, but it needed Lord Howe and his signals to control, direct and supervise. And Lord Howe was quite exhausted. He was not a man of middle age. He was all but seventy. He had not been fighting for the last five hours, but for five consecutive days. For five consecutive days he had enjoyed no rest but what he could obtain from his stiff-backed wooden chair. Little wonder if he felt ready to rest when he saw the battle won; little wonder if he left something to subordinates when he had done so much himself. "We all got round him," writes Codrington who knew the nature of fatigue. "Indeed I saved him from a tumble. He was so weak that from a roll of the ship he was nearly falling into the waist.

'Why, you hold me up as if I were a child,' he said good-humouredly."

And after all what need of apology? The splendour of the victory must not be gauged by prizes alone. The casualty lists are eloquent as to the decisiveness of the result. The English lost 300 killed and thrice 300 wounded. The French lost more than this in the six captured ships alone.

When all was over the *Charlotte's* master asked Lord Howe to receive a deputation. Lord Howe readily consented and took his stand on the poop. Then there assembled below him a group of common seamen who in a few plain words desired to thank him for the handsome way he had led them to victory. For the only time in his life Lord Howe was completely taken aback. With difficulty concealing his emotion, he solemnly removed his hat and assured them it was like their honest selves to come and thank him when thanks were more properly due from him to them. But it was the particular merit of Lord Howe that he inspired in the men of his fleet, as perhaps no one had ever done before him but Lord Anson, a desire to offer personal service in place of routine duty. It would have been strange if those who fought for love of "Black Dick" had not defeated the less fortunate who laboured under the shadow of the guillotine. The quality of Howe's seamen is certified by many instances. In one case where two ships were grinding together a sailor resolved to board the enemy. "Why, Jack," exclaimed his mate, "you haven't even got a cutlass!" "Plenty there, old fellow," said Jack, and returned from his excursion with two. In Gardner's ship and Pakenham's there were several who had lost their limbs on 28th and 29th May. These at first looked in vain for the chance of being useful. But at last they descended to the cockpit and cheerfully perjured themselves: assuring those who awaited the knife that though painful at the moment this shearing of limbs was uncommonly comfortable afterwards.

But the French in many of their ships fought nobly too, and nowhere more nobly than on board the *Vengeur*. This ship did all that ship could do: she went on firing as long as she could float. All her masts went over the side without altering her determination. But there were mortal injuries below the waterline; and though the pumps were manned and the guns thrown

overboard the *Vengeur* still subsided. Then and not till then did she surrender. The English gladly stood by to help such plucky foemen. Captain Renaudin was rescued and nearly 400 of his company. But it was impossible to liberate all the wounded from below and before the boats could finish their devoted work some hundred unwounded went down with the ship, cheering their Republic to the last.*

Quite apart from Lord Howe's great tactical manœuvre, quite apart from the captures made, this success of 1794 has a victorious significance entirely its own. Never since she became a first-class naval Power had Britain opened a great campaign with a big pitched battle decisively won. In some wars, such as the Seven Years' War and the War of the English Succession, there had been a definite defeat; in others, such as the Wars of the Austrian Succession and American Independence, there had been battles drawn in the enemy's favour; even in the First and Second Dutch Wars there had been an absence of finality in the British advantage that encouraged the enemy to go on. But here at last was a first-class war preluded by a first-class victory. Great as it was, it heralded still better things to come.†

There was another glorious day when Lord Howe swept into Spithead with six prizes to grace his triumph. He was signally honoured. The King and Queen and Royal Family came down from London and, after scattering largesse to the poor of Portsmouth, embarked in the Admiral's barge. The Lords of the Admiralty attended them and the captains of the fleet in their boats. Lord Howe awaited them on board the *Charlotte* and received His Majesty on bended knee. The Admiral's flag was hauled down, the Royal Standard broken at the main and all the ships of the fleet saluted with their guns. As immediate marks of his gratitude, the King hung round the Admiral's neck a gold chain and placed in his hand a sword set with diamonds. Then at three

* Many chroniclers have lent their countenance to a story, first circulated by Barrère in the National Convention, that the *Vengeur* went down with colours flying; cp. Carlyle, "French Revolution," Book V, Chap. VI. The pluck of the gallant seventy-four was so real a thing that it is a poor compliment to invest her with legendary fame.

† This in itself accounts for the name of the battle; though as it was fought 400 miles from the nearest land (47° 48′ N., and 18° 30′ W.) it would have been difficult to find a more descriptive title.

o'clock dinner was served on board, and His Majesty gave the following toast: "The Admiral with the Union at the top-mast head, he who alone deserves to wear it!"

Lord Howe caused his diamond sword to be carried to every ship; and carefully explained that it was not so much a kingly gift to himself as a visible symbol of Britain's gratitude to all who fought on the First of June. In every ship the sword was greeted with cheers, but in the *Charlotte* every man pressed forward and respectfully took turns to touch its haft. They knew as well as the King himself what symbolism meant.

When the Admiral was free from public duties he received an urgent message from one who desired to see him. It was Captain John Harvey of the *Brunswick*. His shattered arm had been removed and the wound was healing; but his bruised back would not heal. The doctors were hopeful. John Harvey shook his head. But he wanted to see Lord Howe. He wanted to know if he had done his duty as his Admiral's second astern. If Lord Howe would only come to him, he would know he was not disappointed. Lord Howe was quickly at his bedside; and happy to hear what most he longed to hear, the *Brunswick's* fated chieftain breathed his last.

The final list of rewards was generous and worthy of the occasion. The Admiral's second and third in command were raised to the peerage as Lord Graves and Lord Bridport. Baronetcies were conferred on Pasley of the *Bellerophon*; Bowyer, Collingwood's chief; Curtis the flag-captain, and that famous fellow Gardner. Gardner also was appointed General of Marines and "Jimmy" Gambier, Colonel. In respect of lost limbs Pasley and Bowyer received pensions of £1000. Almost all captains received gold chains; and gorgeous medals were designed for Lord Bridport, Sir Alan Gardner, and Sir Roger Curtis. Curtis also received a flag and every man in the fleet two guineas in solid cash.

There was however some doubt as to what should be done for Lord Howe. Of course he received the thanks of Parliament, money rewards and freedom of cities. But there was some dispute as to his title. He was an Earl already and desired to remain so. Many however desired for him a marquisate, and the adoring bluejackets thought even this insufficient. One of them in hot debate exclaimed, "A Marquis, you blockhead! The King must

make him one of the Blood Royal." The King was quite ready to make him a Duke, but when the Admiral was asked to name his reward it was the Garter that he selected.

So in taverns they drank to the gartered knight, toasted "the two first words of the Third Psalm," and trusted the "French would ever know HOWE to be master of the sea".

THE YEAR OF MUTINIES. 1797

His work accomplished, Lord Howe would have liked to retire. But the King and Mr. Pitt would not suffer him to do so. He pleaded ill-health and they permitted him to leave the fleet with Lord Bridport his second, and absent himself as long as he pleased. But to name a successor they would not consent. And so he happened to be still ashore when in the beginning of 1797 the naval supremacy of Britain was undermined by a peril more deadly and insidious than any scheme of foreign invasion.

One might hazard a guess that the Mutiny was caused by the quality of the food and the quantity of stripes. Readers are familiar with Smollett's account of the meat and biscuit issued to the fleet that blockaded Carthagena. It is to be feared that his picture is not overdrawn. The food was always bad and often loathsome. The biscuit was nauseous, the breakfast gruel revolting, the butter and cheese uneatable, and the salted meat like old rope. But there were one or two things that seasoned what would otherwise have been utterly repulsive. In the first place the sea air gave men the appetite of an alderman and the digestion of an ostrich; and then it was apparent even to the stupidest "waister" that it was not the authorities, but the desert of the sea that made their food so stale and unpalatable. Moreover the pea-soup was invariably excellent and the liberal allowance of grog atoned for much. Again the "Cat" was no doubt as devilish an instrument as any tormentor wielded. But it must be remembered that a flogging could be ordered by the captain alone, and administered only after he had assembled the ship's company and read to them the articles of war. To prove that the "Cat" was guilty of brutalizing the service, it would be necessary to prove that the majority of captains were inhuman. And this by no means could be proved. The most perfect discipline was not enforced

by the "Cat," and the most perfect discipline was common enough. Many captains could exact the uttermost farthing of obedience from the lower deck without resort to undue severity. It was the gentle Collingwood who vowed that his men should salute a midshipman's coat even if it were merely hung up to dry.

The majority of seamen regarded the "Cat" as the best protection for men of good character. Not a word was said about flogging in the Mutiny at Spithead. On the score of food there were minor complaints. The men considered that enough was not done to protect them from scurvy. They were willing to tolerate bad food if real efforts were made to mitigate its consequence. From the days of Rodney every ship was bound to carry lime-juice and other correctives. But the seamen thought themselves entitled to fresh vegetables at least when their ship was in port. No such provision was made. Then the rations were never issued in full. There was a standard ration which included seven pounds of biscuit per week, six of salt meat; two pints of peas, one and a half of oatmeal; six ounces of sugar, six of butter and twelve of cheese; together with seven gallons of beer or the equivalent in grog. But these were always docked and cut down. The pound measured fourteen instead of sixteen ounces: or the rations were issued in the proportion of six to a mess of eight or three to a mess of four. This may have been intended to prevent waste, but it was naturally regarded as dishonest.

A very much more serious grievance was the matter of pay. In the first place it was small. The ordinary seaman was entitled to nineteen shillings a month, and the able-bodied seaman to twenty-two shillings and sixpence. This scale had been fixed in Charles II's day, and had undergone no change. In 1797 the best men in the Navy could draw no more than they could a hundred years before. And, in the interval, prices generally had increased by 30 per cent. The able-bodied seamen would infinitely have preferred the merchant service where it was possible to make as much as from two to four pounds a week.

The smallness of the pay would have mattered less if the seamen had been able to handle it: but their chances of doing so were problematic. No attempt was made to fix things up during a cruise. The cruise was regarded as piece-work. If the man did his part, if he laboured like a galley-slave for the entire cruise,

he might put in a claim for payment at the end of it. Of course if he were foolish enough to get killed in action, it stood to reason that he would not be able to put in a claim at all. Again if he did not do his work; if he spent his time in sick-bay when he should have been aloft, the time so wasted was knocked off his claim. His stay in hospital might be due to scurvy engendered by the badness of the food or to wounds received in battle with the foe: it mattered not. He could not both do and not do his work. If for any reason whatsoever he had not done his work, he could not prove that he had. There the matter ended. There was no redress. A cruise might last, and often did, for four years. At the end of it, let it be supposed that a capable seaman, honest and upright, returned sound in wind and limb: could he at last obtain his pay? Not at all. He was not for one moment regarded as a State creditor. Still in his character as claimant he had to prove to the satisfaction of all and every that the claim put forward was right and lawful. This done he received what was known as a *Ticket*, which entitled him on going ashore to the sum inscribed on it.

And here it is necessary for a moment to turn aside from the matter of pay to another that proved even more vexatious to the much-tried heroes of the lower deck. When they arrived in harbour they were not allowed to go ashore. It was assumed as a proposition needing no proof that if a given number of seamen were put ashore they would never be seen again. There was therefore no such thing as Leave.*

Now let it be supposed that a ship returning was immediately re-commissioned. How were the company to "realize" their tickets? The bum-boats plied alongside. The passing moment might be brightened. But where was the money for purchases? There was an irresistible temptation to sell the ticket for what it would fetch to whomsoever would buy it. Whenever a ship reached harbour the Jews swarmed round and did a roaring trade. They were entitled of course to charge a commission, for there was much formality to be gone through before the paper could be converted into money, and there was the trouble of rowing out to the ship and negotiating the bargain. But it will be readily believed that the percentages levied were iniquitous and that the

* In the first ten years of this war 42,000 men deserted.

simple seamen, impatient of delay, were sucked without remorse by these vampires. There were alternative courses. The ticket-holder might cling to his paper until he actually could go ashore; or he might endeavour to send the scrip to his family. There were those who served King and country faithfully for eight or nine years without touching so much as a farthing. There were some who presented their tickets after an interval of fourteen years; men who had passed from one commission to another without a single opportunity of setting foot on shore. Thousands of faithful souls sent their tickets home: but the wives of seamen could only "convert" by presenting themselves personally in London. This was to ask an impossible thing. The poor women took the one available course. They sold to speculators and thought themselves lucky if they received two shillings and sixpence in the pound.

Quite apart from irregularities of pay there was enough to stir to mutiny and rage in the very constitution of a ship's company. The service was recruited in half-a-dozen ways, but there was something amiss with all of them. First and foremost stands the system of "Impressment". The Government authorized the captains of ships to impress a certain number of His Majesty's SEAMEN. In doing so they legalized lawlessness. The "seamen" liable to be impressed included the maritime population; using the words in their widest signification. The captain commissioning a ship and requiring hands would do his utmost to collect the necessary numbers by advertising for what he wanted, by enlarging upon the attractions of the service, especially the certainty of prize-money and the liberal allowance of grog. If this failed, and it was seldom that such promises would make up a full complement, then he had resort to the "Press". A lieutenant and a few trusty veterans would be put ashore, for preference at night, to sweep the haunts of sailormen. They were not allowed to carry fire-arms, but with clubs and cobs they laid about them and secured whom they could. They wanted no land-lubbers. But there was no uniform for lower ratings and consequently they took what they found in the taverns, whether they were tinkers or tailors, butchers or ploughboys; no young fellow was safe after a certain hour in the back streets of a sea-port town.* The Press-gang is

* In theory those who could prove that they were not "Seamen" were entitled to instant release; but they had to prove their identity to the satis-

chiefly remembered for its cruel practices ashore; but far less justifiable were its practices afloat. It was the common thing for men-of-war to waylay a merchantman returning from a cruise, and abstract the very pick of her crew. This was a most cruel and barbarous custom.

When a war broke out the Government would offer Bounties* to any seamen who would voluntarily come forward without being "pressed". If the war was likely to be prolonged many of the best men in the merchant service accepted the bounty as insurance: for it was extremely unlikely that they would escape throughout the war and, if pressed, they had of course no bounty. But what must have been the feelings of a man who on his return from a long trading venture to the Indies, found himself at last in the Channel, with his home almost in sight, only to be snatched from a comfortable berth and high pay to be immured in one of His Majesty's ships with the chance of a piece of paper if he survived his term of years!

In a big war the "Bounty" and "Press" together were unable to satisfy the needs of the service. Resort was therefore had to other methods. Chief among these was the *Quota*. Each county and every seaport town was asked for a contribution of men to serve in His Majesty's ships. Rutland would supply some twenty seamen, Yorkshire eleven hundred, and London, in addition to what the press-gang took, six thousand or thereabouts. It must not however be supposed that the Sheriffs and Mayors set themselves up as recruiting-sergeants. They regarded the *Quota* as an admirable opportunity for cleansing their jurisdictions of all undesirable characters. In some cases the magistrates did not hesitate to make a clean sweep of the jails.† The "alien" problem and the "unemployed" did not in those days worry men much. Marryat mentions a battleship manned by nineteen different nationalities and fifty-seven different trades.

It may be argued that the dregs delivered by the *Quota* were

faction of the Admiralty. Most of these wretched "State-the-Case" men found possession nine points of the law when the ship to which they were carried weighed anchor before their arguments were answered.

* Ranging from thirty shillings to thirty pounds.

† Criminals convicted on a capital count were generally given their choice between the gallows and the Navy. Many were known to choose the gallows.

eventually licked into shape by the able seamen aboard. This was so. But with a fleet manned in the methods described it is less a matter for surprise that mutiny broke out than that mutiny was not a normal occurrence.

There had been occasional outbreaks: but never anything at all resembling the widespread affair of 1797. What then brought things to a head? In the first place it must be remembered that the Revolutionary War was a time of very general agitation, a time when noisy demagogues stirred men up to a sense of their wrongs. Where injustice was rampant they found a ready audience, and injustice was rampant in the British fleet. It might be supposed that nothing would have been easier than to isolate such an institution from the corrupting leaven of revolutionary ideas. The ships were seldom in home waters. They were separate one from another. The men when at home were not allowed on shore, or being ashore were absorbed again in the general population. But no: as Louis XVI betrayed himself by assembling the States General, so Mr. Pitt betrayed himself by the *Quota*. Social and political agitators were classed as undesirable and sent for reformation to the fleet. The fleet suppressed thieving and drunkenness, but listened with interest to the "Rights of Man".

The spark that set the whole conflagration ablaze was insignificant enough. The soldiers were no better off than the sailors in the matter of pay. The line regiments received eight pence halfpenny a day and, as prices had been increased by the war, they clamoured for an increase to a shilling a day. The demand was backed by influential persons and instantly conceded.

At the beginning of 1797 Lord Howe received four petitions for an increase of pay. They were from the *Royal George*, *Formidable*, *Ramillies*, and *Charlotte*, all of them ships in the Channel squadron. The fact that these petitions were sent to Lord Howe is worthy of remark. They were not sent to the temporary commander, Lord Bridport. The petitioners were anxious that all things should be done in an orderly manner and knew that, if there was anyone in the kingdom who sympathized with their troubles and had influence sufficient to obtain redress, "Black Dick" was assuredly the man. But unfortunately for the seamen, and unfortunately for England, Lord Howe was in a very feeble state. He was not only confined to his house but quite unable to move

without crutches. He therefore forwarded the petitions to the Admiralty and the Admiralty, quite unsuspicious, pigeon-holed the documents and thought no more of them.

In April the Admiral commanding at Portsmouth discovered among the ships at Spithead a plot to enforce their demands. He notified the Admiralty and the Admiralty, acting promptly, ordered Lord Bridport to take the fleet to sea, so that the nonsense should be blown from their heads. But it was already too late. When Lord Bridport gave the order to sail, the ships' companies manned the yards and gave three cheers. Then the red flag was hoisted. This signified "Battle," not socialism. The bluejackets were ready to fight for their rights. They were not going to sea again until their demands were conceded. They took the command out of the hands of the officers: the officers were powerless before the absolute unanimity of the Lower Deck. There was no violence, not a trace of it. The mutineers were, if the term may be allowed, dignified. They were resolved that a good cause should not be spoiled by injudicious and slovenly behaviour. In every ship two "Delegates" were appointed, and these attended a "General Assembly" which in the state cabin of the *Charlotte* sat to execute business and legislate for the fleet. The delegates were treated with the utmost respect. When they entered or left a ship the marine sentries stood at attention, the bos'n piped the side, and all heads were uncovered. The "General Assembly" made every arrangement necessary for the orderly dispatch of business. They allowed the various trade-fleets to sail and appointed frigates for their convoy. They allowed no disrespect to officers. They demanded from all adherents oaths of fidelity to the common cause. They enforced sobriety and administered corporal punishment. They reeved ropes at the yard-arm for the terror of offenders. As far as discipline was concerned the fleet was never under better management.*

When the news reached London an Admiralty commission hurried down to Portsmouth to see what they could do. They consulted with Lord Bridport, and made it their early business to

* It may be wondered how the various ships were able to co-operate in the uniform measures they adopted before the outbreak. They were assisted by a well-established custom which allowed the seamen when a ship was in port to visit other ships on a Sunday afternoon.

discover the exact nature of the seamen's demands. The delegates required that rations should be issued in full, that fresh vegetables should be supplied whenever possible, that pay should not be stopped when an invalid was in sick-bay, and that to none should be denied, when the fleet was in port, leave of absence to visit his friends. This was a charter of liberties. And the cheeriest mutineer hardly hoped to see the whole of it carried through. But there was one other demand, and this the most important of all. The delegates demanded that pay should be increased to a shilling a day, and regularly disbursed. Round this claim negotiations centred: and as there was a general opinion that an instant concession on the point would send the men back to their duty, the commissioners decided to yield it.

To convey their offer to the General Assembly ambassadors were chosen, among others Sir Alan Gardner. The Assembly received them coldly, listened to their overtures without enthusiasm, and proposed to return an answer after due deliberation. This proved too much for Admiral Gardner. To see these upstarts seated in the cabin of Lord Howe and dictating to their superiors—! Faugh! It was too much. He seized one delegate by the scruff of the neck and shook the breath out of him. The Assembly were concerned at this unseemly outburst: it ill became the dignity of a British Parliament. A menial approached and informed the Admiral that the cutter was ready to take him ashore. Cutter! He would not stir without his barge. Did they understand? The *Barge!* So the Admiral's barge was manned and Sir Alan retired from the scene. He knew how to fight De Grasse and Villaret, but these deputies were too much for him.

After due consideration the parliament of seamen returned answer that they would accept the Admiralty offer on condition that the King's pardon should extend to all that they had done contrary to the laws of discipline. This was readily granted. Whereupon the seamen returned to their duty and the commissioners to London.

Had the Government given the mutineers credit for honesty of purpose, all might yet have been well. But the rebellion was attributed to vicious ringleaders, to the natural aptitude for grumbling on the part of those who have nothing to do, to bad blood, to Jacobin societies, to anything rather than a genuine

desire to correct abuses. In consequence no trouble was taken to push a special pay-bill through Parliament. The matter was debated in leisurely fashion and with closed doors. Meanwhile the Admiralty set itself to discover by *a priori* reasoning what was the real and true and effective cause of the recent outbreak. They reached a conclusion satisfactory to themselves and sent down to the fleet a special instruction that all small arms should be looked to, kept in better order than heretofore, and so disposed that they could be handed out to the Marines at a moment's notice. Mutiny was inherent in seamen and might readily be suppressed if captains would hold themselves in readiness to act with rigour and severity.

This memorandum was regarded by the officers as wilfully injudicious, and they did their best while acting up to the spirit of the instructions to conceal the letter. But somehow or other the news leaked out. On board the *Duke* the men demanded to see the latest order. The captain in the interests of discipline had destroyed it. At once the flame of mutiny leapt up again with far more danger. The men of the *Duke* sent to Lord Bridport for a copy and informed him bluntly that if he refused they would flog their captain at the gangway. Lord Bridport of course yielded. The wretched order was proclaimed throughout the fleet and had the worst possible effect. The men mistrusted everybody. They had been made game of by the Commissioners. There was no intention to ratify by Act of Parliament the promises by which they had been gulled.

Lord Bridport was at his wits' end. The French at Brest were growing restless and once again he gave the order to sail. As before, the rigging and yards were manned. Up went the red flag. Three cheers were given and the delegates once more took command of the fleet.

This second revolt took place in the beginning of May. At that time the majority of the ships were lying off St. Helen's; but the *London* and *Marlborough* were still at Spithead, the *London* with the flag of Admiral Colpoys. The Admiral, glass in hand, watched the movements of the St. Helen's squadron and observed the passing and repassing of boats. He knew what it meant. The mutineers were at work again. Presently he saw that they were coming to call. He piped all hands at once and in a forcible little speech asked if they had any further grounds of complaint.

They all assured him that they had none. He therefore ordered them below and gave instructions to have the port-lids shut. In the spirit of the Admiralty order he resolved by firmness and vigour to keep command of his ship.

The delegates came alongside. They were refused admission but found no difficulty in talking to the crew. The port-lids were lifted out of curiosity and a score of heads looked out. On the foc's'le too were standing some who had disobeyed orders from the first. These now became truculent and one of them lashed a crowbar to the muzzle of a gun to haul it round and train it on the quarter-deck. The first lieutenant, Bover by name, hailed him and ordered him to stop. The man replied insolently. Bover shot him dead.

In a moment all was confusion and uproar. The men rushed from below, or tried to do so : and the officers and marines gathered round the hatch to drive them back. The ladder would not accommodate many, but some of the men scrambled through the ports and swarmed their way up the sides. The officers sent to Colpoys for permission to fire. This was given. The scuffle grew warmer. Many of the seamen were wounded and lay about the deck weltering in their blood. Gradually numbers prevailed. The men obtained arms. A marine officer was wounded and a midshipman. Colpoys' scheme to retain command by coercion ended ignominiously.

And now a drum-head court martial was called, and Lieutenant Bover condemned to death. He was dragged to the foc's'le. A rope was reeved at the yard-arm and the noose put round his neck. Even so he ceased not to revile the mutineers : called them the "basest and most dastardly of cowards and traitors". A topman called out that Bover was a "brave boy," but Death clutched the rope and Bover would have suffered if it had not been for the Admiral. He made his voice heard above the tumult and took the whole blame upon himself. Bover, he said, was innocent. What had been done had been done in obedience to his orders, and if anyone was to blame, it was himself. For a moment it certainly did look as if the noose would be merely transferred from Bover's neck to the Admiral's. But the thoughts of the executioners were opportunely diverted by a common seaman who stepping from the ranks poured upon the Admiral's head such a ghastly stream of

obscene profanities that there was not a man among them who was not shocked. They silenced the fellow and threatened to throw him overboard. So the Admiral's life was saved.

In the end the officers were imprisoned during the pleasure of the ship's company: the wounded were sent ashore to Haslar: and the *London* and *Marlborough* proceeded to the choice of delegates. Meanwhile Bover was summoned to appear before a coroner's jury to answer to a charge of manslaughter. The "Londoners" were little inclined to let him attend. He might escape. "Whatever happens," he said, "I will return!" The jury brought in a verdict of "justifiable homicide". Bover was released and instantly rowed out to his ship. He was just a little surprised when the entire company greeted him with ringing cheers and implored him to let bygones be bygones and never change his ship.

From which it will be seen that even mutineers are human.

But there was no longer any disguising the fact that the Mutiny had taken a turn for the worse. At St. Helen's one of the ships declared her intention of giving herself up to the French. The other ships turned their guns on her by day and set guard-boats to watch by night. The delegates as before were resolved to keep order. But two things were plain for any man to see. If my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty ventured down to Portsmouth a second time they could hardly hope to be laughed at. They were more likely to be ducked. And unless something were done and quickly the enemies of England would profit by the disorder that paralysed her first line of defence.

After all, this was no time of profound peace; but the critical year of the greatest of wars!

It is said to have been the King himself who in a happy moment lighted on the remedy. Lord Howe was the only man in England to whom the seamen would listen, the only man in England who could bring them back to their obedience. Lord Howe was still crippled with the gout, but had discarded his crutches, and could hobble about with a stick. He accepted the King's invitation and promised cheerfully to end the rebellion. He took an exceedingly firm line with the Government, demanded full and absolute powers to deal with the delegates, and obtained the Act of Parliament embodying the pay concessions as a basis

on which to work. He went down to Portsmouth as dictator. His first act was to visit every ship in company with the delegates. It was quite pathetic, as he came alongside, to see the behaviour of the various ships' companies. They had bullied. They had blustered. They had wounded their officers and tried them for misconduct. They had insulted Admirals and bearded the First Lord himself. But it was different now. They treated Lord Howe not as if he were an ambassador, or mediator, or plenipotentiary; not even as if he were the greatest Admiral in Britain, the man who had led them to victory on that glorious day of June. They treated him, every man of them from the most pompous delegate to the rapscallion out at elbows, simply as their oldest friend. Every head was bared. No one spoke. There was no sound but the flapping of loose cordage somewhere, and the murmur of wavelets lapping against the side. Very carefully and very reverently they drew him on board, for he was quite incapable of climbing up himself. Then he addressed them like a father. He was very sorry indeed for what had occurred. Yet he sympathized with them. They had their grievances of course. Everybody had. But grievances, however well founded, did not justify them for acts of violence. By violence they put themselves in the wrong. Could they not see that? Now there was the question of pay. That was to them a very vital question. His Majesty, God bless him [cheers], had granted their demand at once. Now every one knew that this grant must be ratified by Parliament. And Parliament worked slowly. That was their way. They weren't smart and handy like seamen. But they passed the Act in due form. And here it was, here in his hand. And now who was in the wrong? What had his boys been doing while Parliament was redressing their grievances? Well, he would not speak of that. They were sorry, he knew, for what was past, and would express their regret. If they did so he would make things all right with the King. If they did not, then he feared his journey had been in vain.

The mutineers hung their heads and began to find matter for minute inspection in the caulking of the seams.

"Are you sorry, lads?" he asked them. "Ay, ay, Sir!" they said. That was all.

So the Great Mutiny ended.

Lord Howe afterwards took counsel with the delegates as to what further steps were necessary to ensure the allegiance of the fleet. They submitted to him a list of officers, one hundred and five in number, whom they asked him to remove. There were seventy-two commissioned and thirty-three warrant officers. Of the former twenty-nine were midshipmen; and five only above the rank of lieutenant. Lord Howe did not like the request, but felt certain that discipline would not be helped by their retention. He removed the hundred and five: made it clear to all concerned that they were not cashiered: and secretly recommended the Admiralty to keep them on full pay until such time as they could again be employed.

On 16th May anchors were weighed and the main fleet of England returned to its duty.

The mutiny of the Channel Fleet was in a social sense the turning-point in the history of the Navy. It opened men's eyes to what the seamen had to endure in the service of their country. It inaugurated a series of reforms which have culminated in the present comparative comfort of the lower deck at sea. But for a time the example of the Spithead mutineers had the worst possible influence. It infected all mariners who heard of it and corrupted every limb of the fleet.

The most serious consequence was the mutiny at the Nore which broke out just as the Portsmouth riots subsided. There were in the Thames at the time but three battleships and some frigates. The movement was a spurious and vulgar imitation. The mutineers mutinied because it was the thing to do, because mutiny seemed to pay, because there was something enjoyable in outraging authority on specious pleas. They chose as ringleader "Parker the Delegate," a rebel and worse from his birth. He was the son of an Exeter tradesman; went to sea and by ability became a midshipman; as such was dismissed from two ships in succession for immorality; later became a master's mate and was broken for insubordination; was disrated and sent before the mast; was invalided and dismissed the service as an imbecile; drifted from place to place and was at last imprisoned for debt at Edinburgh; was included in the Perth *quota* as a minor criminal; and, six weeks before the mutiny, was taken aboard the *Sandwich*

flagship at the Nore! Parker behaved extravagantly and assumed the most absurd airs. He was known as the "Admiral" and selected his own flag-captain. He re-edited the demands made at Spithead with impossible additions of his own. He was insolent to everyone: insolent to his "officers," insolent to the delegates, insolent to the Admiralty commission that came down to Sheerness to interview him. It was impossible that any good could come from any movement headed by such a man. And from the first there was a small minority who saw as much. The earliest dissenters were two frigates, the *Clyde* and *San Fiorenzo*. These wise little vessels determined to leave company so distasteful. The *Clyde* got away safely; but the *San Fiorenzo* had to run the gauntlet, and the mutinous ships thought it no shame to pour their broadsides into her.

If Parker had confined his activities to three battleships he would not have imperilled his country: but he drew from their allegiance all but two of the North Sea Fleet, then serving under Admiral Duncan. These joined him at the end of May, and the general conduct of the mutineers grew worse. There was no semblance of decency. Parker and his "staff" landed in Chatham and with a ribald following proceeded through the town with red flags flying. They stopped the merchantmen advancing up the Thames and pillaged them. They went ashore in marauding parties and stripped the farms of their produce. They tried unpopular warrant officers, flogged them, shaved their heads and tarred and feathered them. They blockaded London. Consols fell below 49.

On shore the revolt was reprobated by all. Parker had not a single supporter anywhere. London was resolved to the last man to defeat him. An Admiral and a General acting together opened a campaign against him. The General occupied Chatham and Sheerness, brought heavy artillery to bear on the river; collected appliances for red-hot shot and built new batteries. The Admiral armed a fleet of gunboats and removed the buoys in the Thames, so that the mutineers should not escape. Parker's ships began to mistrust and then one by one to desert him. First the *Leopard* slunk away; on 9th June the *Repulse*. The smaller ships crept up the river, the larger came to Sheerness. On 12th June the rebels had only seven battleships left. Next day in five of

them there were violent struggles between Parker's supporters and the better sort. In the end all five surrendered. On 14th June the *Sandwich* hauled down her flag. Boatloads of soldiers came alongside, but Parker made no resistance. He confessed his crimes and hoped that his voluntary surrender would be the means of saving those he had deceived. He was arrested and on 22nd June was tried by court martial. A week later the yellow flag was hoisted on board the *Sandwich*, a rope was reeved at the yard-arm and the Marat of the Navy found a fitting end. Eighteen others were executed, fourteen seamen and four marines. Many were imprisoned. Several endured a flogging through the fleet, a punishment worse than death.*

Lord Howe's public work ended with the Mutiny. Mr. Pitt did not longer oppose his wish to retire; and the closing years of the great Admiral's life were spent in peaceful seclusion at Porter's Lodge, his seat near St. Albans. Here he had a room rigged up on the model of his cabin in the *Charlotte*, so that to the end he might fancy himself on board. He spent his time among his books and when his health allowed would hobble about the gardens. What he loved better than anything was to hear news of the Service: and he lived long enough to see the victories of St. Vincent and Camperdown eclipsed by the victory of the Nile.

In 1799 "our great master of naval strategy and bravery" died

* The most dreadful event of 1797 was the mutiny of the *Hermione*. But it had no real connexion with kindred events at Spithead and the Nore. The *Hermione* was a frigate on the Jamaica station. Her captain, Pigot, was a brutal foul-mouthed bully. He did not hesitate to use the "Cat". He ploughed red furrows in the backs of his crew. He made of their lives a hideous nightmare. They were lying off Puerto Rico in September and the topmen were lying out on the yard taking in a reef. Pigot in a voice of thunder howled to them to hurry: for he'd flog the last men down. The last men down would be the first men up, the yard-arm men, the handiest in the ship. They strove to avoid their fate; missed their footing and fell dead at his feet. He cursed their clumsiness and called the after-guard to "fling the lubbers overboard". That night the company rose as one man. With every circumstance of horror and brutality they butchered the captain, three lieutenants, an officer of marines, the surgeon and purser. All the bodies were foully mangled. The bos'n was handed over to the ship's boys who did him to death with slow torture, scraping and rubbing the flesh from his bones. When the orgy of blood was over they carried the tumbril ship into the port of La Guayra, and handed her over to the Spaniards.

in the seventy-fourth year of his age. He was buried in the family vault at Langar in Nottinghamshire, where a monument was erected to his memory. A statelier work from the chisel of Flaxman was also set up in St. Paul's; but a more appropriate memorial is contained in the letters of one who was in his later years Lord Howe's most close and intimate friend. "His exemplary conduct in private life must, on the present melancholy occasion, be the only true comfort of those who loved him," wrote King George III. "I trust the example he has set to the Navy will long continue not only to stimulate the matchless bravery of the officers, but convince them of the necessity to view the profession in a scientific light, by which alone those improvements are to be acquired which will retain their superiority over other nations which every Englishman must desire."

DUNCAN

BORN 1731—DIED 1804

This Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued.—SHAKESPEARE.

ADAM DUNCAN was born in Dundee in a house at the end of the Seagait. The Duncans of Lundie were an old county family with a fine estate nestling among the Sidlaws beside the road to Cupar Angus. But their attachment was all to the town itself, where for generations they had filled positions of honour and responsibility. Dundee to-day is right proud of her great sea worthy. There is a fine portrait of the Admiral by Hoppner in the Town House, and in the Art Gallery a whole room is devoted to pictures of his officers, his ships and himself.

What induced young Duncan to go to sea cannot now with certainty be said. There is a tradition that he was attracted by the stories he heard of Anson's voyage. Certainly it was just after Anson's return and in the middle of the "Forty-five" that he joined the ship of his cousin Captain Haldane, and his first experience was at Inverness where the *Trial* co-operated with the Duke of Cumberland in the Culloden campaign. Soon after this he became acquainted with Keppel and there sprang up between the two a mutual affection and esteem. With Keppel Duncan served as midshipman, third, second and first lieutenant, flag captain and post. He accompanied Keppel to Algiers and on both expeditions to Rochefort. He became a commander in 1759 and so missed Quiberon: but he was Captain of the *Valiant*, Keppel's flagship at the capture of Belleisle and the sack of Havana. He was known in the service as "Keppel's Duncan" and gloried in

the title. He should certainly be regarded as Keppel's disciple and the inheritor of his views.

It was when Duncan was captain of the *Valiant* that Reynolds painted his portrait. One may be permitted to doubt whether Sir Joshua ever had a finer model. Adam Duncan was the biggest, the strongest and the handsomest man in His Majesty's Navy. "He was of size and strength almost gigantic. He is described as six feet four in height and of corresponding breadth." As he passed through Chatham once on his appointment to a lieutenancy "the inhabitants were so struck with his figure and appearance that they came out of their houses and followed him as far as the eye could reach as though they beheld some strange or unusual prodigy".

Up to the time that he obtained post-rank Duncan was singularly blest. But just as his fortune rose with Keppel's, so with Keppel's it fell. When Ushant was fought and Keppel disgraced, Duncan was forty-seven and a captain of many years' standing. Younger men and less capable had already received a flag. But every one knew him as "Keppel's Duncan". Every one knew that he had seen service under Keppel and under no one else but Keppel. Every one knew that he thought the world of Keppel and that Keppel thought the world of him. All this now counted heavily against him. And then by his association with Keppel he was handicapped in another way. The Havana campaign had undermined his health and the doctors declared in the most insistent way that if he returned to the West Indies his life would not be worth a moment's purchase. He was obliged therefore to accept service on this side of the Atlantic in the one war above all others when the West Indies were the "station for Honour". His ship was ordered to America in 1781 and he was obliged to seek an exchange. His successor took part in the Chesapeake fight, in Frigate Bay and The Saints. When service in home waters lent no occasion for glory Duncan had to content himself with the Channel Fleet: and to one so imbued with the spirit of Keppel the strictly defensive campaign of 1779 was a bitter experience. After this it was a relief to form one of Rodney's fleet that fought the Spaniards by moonlight. But then it was back to the Channel again until North resigned and Keppel replaced Lord Sandwich at the Admiralty. When Lord Howe rescued Gibraltar in 1782 Duncan

played a distinguished part and established his claim to a flag. But promotion came too late. The peace of 1783 postponed for another dozen years his chance of handling a fleet.

The Revolutionary War when it first broke out was a revolt of all Europe against Jacobinism. But in 1795 the struggle entered on a new phase. Delivered at last from the bloodthirsty rule of Robespierre France placed the control of the State in the hands of sane and practical "Directors". The nations that had joined in the war merely from their horror of *sans-culotte* excesses made this change of government an excuse to retire. Prussia made peace and Spain followed suit. England, however, was too deeply involved. Her vital interests were wrapped up in the fortunes of the Netherlands. And here the campaigning had gone hard with her. Already the French had carried their victorious banners northward to the Rhine. Already they had accomplished more than Louis XIV at his zenith. Even the Dutch had succumbed at last and shackled their freedom in the name of "Liberty". Not that they were absorbed like Belgium in the growing dominion of France, but they retained their separate existence only by yielding to their conquerors the direction of their army and the disposal of their fleet. They had forty-four frigates and thirty-three battleships. Their friendship gave France a valuable seaboard. Forces intended for the invasion of Britain had now two strings to their bow. If the main fleet of England were retained in the Channel the republican armies could embark at the Texel: if the main fleet were sent to watch the Dutch coast there would be an unobstructed passage out of Brest. The dangerous spread of Jacobinical ideas in Ireland lent terror to the new situation.

Britain's only road to safety lay in the immediate establishment of a North Sea fleet; and this is how Admiral Duncan came to be appointed to his first independent command. In the spring of 1795 he was nominated to command against the Dutch, and hoisted his flag at Chatham on board the *Venerable*. She was only a seventy-four, but was selected as more suitable than a first-rate for the shoaly Lowland Sea.

The country's naval power was being stretched to the uttermost. There were reinforcements needed in seven seas. Duncan received no more than four ships at the outset and had, round this

insignificant nucleus, to frame a battle-fleet. The difficulty of his task was increased by the unreadiness of the North Sea coast. There was no suitable base, none at least from which to blockade the coast of Holland. There was Chatham for repairs, but to involve a sailing squadron in the labyrinthine windings of the Thames when it was required to spring upon the Dutch would have been ridiculous; as well attempt to catch rats by shutting up the cat in a rat-trap. Duncan made shift to accommodate himself at Yarmouth. As time went on he received accessions of strength, but the additional ships were doled out one by one. They were as often as not prizes recently captured and patched for the occasion: or Indiamen pierced for more guns than they properly could carry. Duncan had not even the satisfaction of evolving an effective fleet from unpromising material, for over and over again he was called upon to supply this unit or that to complete the number of some other fleet operating at a distance from home.

Throughout 1795 his duties brought little honour and much monotonous routine. As for campaigning there was nothing more enlivening than a tedious blockade. Yet when the Mediterranean command fell vacant and the First Lord pressed him to accept it, Duncan would not abandon a difficult post for all the attractions of a wider berth.

In 1796 England's prospect grew darker. Austria, her one stalwart ally, suffered a succession of disasters in North Italy at the hands of the youthful General Bonaparte. And Spain, who had so recently supported the allies, now with cool deliberation joined the winning side. Her treaty of alliance gave France fifty additional ships and half a dozen excellent ports. The hostile seaboard that England was called upon to blockade extended now in unbroken range from the coast of Denmark to the coast of Italy. And the paralysing completeness of Bonaparte's success removed all hope of further resistance from Austria.

Britain stood alone. Her peril was extreme: the naval coalition against her more formidable than anything she had had to face since the critical years of the American war. France was at liberty to give all her attention to the congenial task of subduing her hereditary foe. And the unsettled state of Ireland pointed the way. In December, 1796, there was assembled at Brest an army of 16,000 men. Their leader was Hoche, a capable officer,

youthful and vigorous. In the port there were eighteen ships of the line, twenty smaller warships and transports. When Hoche gave the word to embark, there was nothing outwardly at least that seemed likely to interfere with the easy accomplishment of his purpose. But the occasion produces the man. Outside Brest was the *Indefatigable* with the pendant of Captain Edward Pellew. As the expedition that was to bring Britain to her knees emerged from the port, the Admiral changed his mind as to the best route to be followed. Whether it was wise of him to do so is beside the point. The fact remains that he did so just as the fleet came out of harbour and just as night sank upon the dusky sea. As he began the work of signalling Pellew with delightful impudence slipped into the very middle of the French fleet and, uninvited, began to play the part of supernumerary repeating frigate. He wasted no time in examining the real signals, but with rockets and flares and guns and lights busily employed himself throughout the night with meaningless signals and contradictory orders. Like Robin Goodfellow or Will-o'-the-wisp he sent the bewildered Frenchmen some in one direction, some in another. Rough weather followed and when the roll was called in Bantry Bay it was discovered that only half of the ships had reached the rendezvous and that the Commander-in-Chief had been left behind! So they abandoned the attempt and returned crestfallen to their starting-place! *

Throughout 1796 Duncan maintained his blockade of the Texel. As long as the wind was east, so sure enough he was outside the port. When the wind went round to the west and seemed inclined to stay there he was off home to take in fresh supplies and give his men a change. The Dutch could not have been more securely imprisoned in cages of iron or thrice barred cells.

So ended the first two years of Duncan's Dutch command. They may have been dull. Duncan found them so. In 1797 at least there was nothing on the score of excitement with which to find fault.

* Of the *Indefatigable* and her further adventures, how she harried the home-returning like a gay-fly, how she teased the great *Rights of Man* and finally flung her on the rocks of Brittany, much that is interesting will be found by the curious in the life of Lord Exmouth of Algiers.

1797!

Never before in the history of this country came a year so fraught with awful possibilities. The political situation had not changed. Britain was still confronted by a triple alliance of naval powers, Holland, France and Spain. The very fact that she had been delivered from the invaders of Ireland by the merciful interposition of providence made it more than ever necessary that in the coming year she should prove herself worthy of divine protection by arming herself at all points. The Navy was her defence, her shield and her stay. She needed a strong fleet in the Mediterranean, a strong fleet in the Bay of Biscay, a strong fleet in the Channel, a strong fleet in the North Sea. Men might well ask what would become of Britain if anything happened to her fleet.

In the spring the Mutiny broke out!

It was on 30th April that the symptoms first appeared in Duncan's fleet. The ships were home at Yarmouth for a spell, and the Spithead news was quick in reaching them. Duncan's flagship was selected by the leaders of the strike for their earliest exhibition. Duncan himself was standing on the quarter-deck, utterly unconscious that there was anything in the wind. Suddenly some of the men on the forecastle raised three lusty cheers. This to Duncan was anathema. Without deigning even to glance in the direction of the sound he summoned all his officers round him, and armed the marines. Then with studied quiet he walked along the gangway and mounted the forecastle. His gigantic figure and majestic mien were of themselves almost enough to quell disturbance. The men who raised the cheers watched him approach and wished they had bitten their tongues instead. When he stood in their midst and in a voice like the first gentle roll of thunder that bodes an angry storm, inquired what it was that had induced them to commit a breach of discipline, not a soul had a word to say. He repeated his question more gently, and still receiving no reply picked out five of the forecastle hands, men whom he suspected as ringleaders, and sent them aft to the poop. The rest he directed to return to their duties. He allowed an interval of time to elapse that the culprits might have time to think over their delinquencies and repent at leisure. Then he piped all hands. The marines fell in on the poop with their muskets ready. The officers assembled on the weather side of the quarter-deck. The

ship's company huddled together on the lee side. When all were set the culprits were brought. The Admiral addressed them. He began with a ringing challenge. The flag that flew at the mast-head was his flag, and never would he suffer it to be lowered by any hands but his own. And who were they that wished to lower it! As he gazed on the insignificant quintette before him, his wrath rose. His gigantic frame seemed to the law-breakers to grow and swell until he appeared to them like Gulliver to the men of Lilliput. With sword in hand he took a step nearer to one of them: and the Chaplain made bold to act as intercessor and shield the *Venerable's* company from the righteous anger of offended justice. But Duncan did not intend to sheath his sword in the mutineer's body. As his speech continued he altered his tone. He was no longer the enemy and avenger, but the cold passionless magistrate, listening to a plea and waiting to fix the penalty. Had the prisoners anything to say in extenuation of their guilt? Could they show cause why resort should not instantly be had to the severest pains of the law? Thus exhorted the prisoners took heart of grace. They ventured to mutter that they only wanted to know when the increased provisions would be served out and the additional pay forthcoming. They had meant nothing more, they mumbled, than to do as their mates at Spithead. They intended no wrong; would not have cheered had they known that cheering would be deemed so criminal. On the whole a weak poor defence. The judge thought so, and said so. The ship's company thought so, and did not say so. They listened to the summing up and began in their own minds to debate the penalty. It would be a case of "Rig the gratings!" beyond a doubt; and "Strip!" and "Seize them up!" But how many lashes? Twenty? Or thirty? Or a hundred? Or three hundred? It is certain that no man on board that day was prepared for the Admiral's actual award. He forgave the offenders, bade them return to their duty, and so dismissed the assembly.

But he did not allow the matter to rest here. His dominant feeling was not anger, but disappointment. He believed in close relations between quarter-deck and ship's company. The comfort and well-being of his men were the constant theme of his thought and care. He knew that at heart there was not a soul among them who was not a manly, straightforward Briton, if only mis-

understandings could be removed. He grieved that they had misbehaved themselves, but he grieved still more that their affection for him had not prevented the outbreak. Just as the "Venerables" were hoping that he was beginning to forget, they were summoned aft again and he made them another speech. From all accounts it was most impressive. "My lads, you have had a week coolly to reflect on what happened on Sunday last," he began, and then he went on to appeal to their better feelings. He showed very clearly the imminent danger that threatened their country and their homes. He asked them to remember what their fathers and mothers and wives would think of such brawling when battle and famine were at their doors. If there were any real grievance, he would be proud to be their spokesman. He had grown grey in the service of his country and had always endeavoured to act justly. It went to his heart to think that he had lost their confidence. "God bless you all!" he concluded, "and may He always have us under His gracious protection and make us better men."

This fatherly address was just what was wanted to seal the bond of fellowship that henceforth bound the "Venerables" body and soul to their commander. The immediate effect was the following rather pathetic document.

MOST WORTHY AND HONOURED SIR,—Not having the gift of speech of accosting you in a proper manner we the ship's company of H.M.S. *Venerable* having taken into consideration the weighty affair which was so indiscreetly committed on the 30th ult. and for which we are sincearly ashamed of we therefore think it our duty to return you our most sincear and hearty thanks for so graciously forgiving us the rash step which we took on that fatel day and so we humbly implore your honour's pardon with hearts full of gratitude and tears in our eyes for the offence we have given to the wortheyest of commanders who as proved a father to us and as such we shall allways honour you. . . . Should it be your honour's orders to go to sea and should it be our fortune to fall in with the enemy we flatter ourselves that their his not one man on board the *Venerable* but what would loose the last drop of his blood in his body before they should obtain any victory over us.

After events will show whether these words were sincere or not.

The total collapse of revolutionary principles on board the flagship was followed by an interval of repose. Indeed there seemed good reason to believe that the entire movement had subsided and that the North Sea fleet at least would prove loyal to the Crown.

On 13th May it is true there was a serious rising on board the *Adamant*, but it was not of long duration. The Admiral proceeded on board, hoisted his flag, and mustered the company. "My lads," he said, "I am not in the smallest degree apprehensive of any violent measures you may have in contemplation; and though I assure you I would rather acquire your love than incur your fear, I will with my own hand put to death the first man who shall display the slightest signs of rebellious conduct." He then demanded to know if there was any man aboard who dared to presume to question or dispute the authority of his officers or himself. One man pushed his way forward and said in an insolent voice, "I do!" Duncan raised his mighty arm and seizing the mutineer by the collar swept him off the deck and lifted him bodily over the side. He held him suspended there by one arm and turning to the ship's company he said, "My lads, look at this fellow who dares to deprive me of the command of the fleet".

It may be imagined with what satisfaction the First Lord heard of Duncan's success in suppressing mutiny. Worried to death by the lawless scenes at Chatham and Sheerness he wrote and asked Duncan for advice and went so far as to suggest that the North Sea fleet should be employed against "Admiral" Parker. Duncan made very sensible suggestions. He recommended that the mutineers who came ashore should be ambushed and captured in the streets: and that boat-loads of men in the dead of night should cut the *Sandwich's* cables and send the "President of the Floating Republic" to flounder among the sand banks. Negotiations were in progress as to his employment in the Thames when the Admiralty received news from the Foreign Office that the Dutch were preparing to put to sea.

On 24th May he received sailing orders.

On 25th May delegates from Parker at the Nore came to canvass and corrupt his fleet.

Duncan captured them!

But it was of no avail. Somehow or other the seeds of mischief were sown; and when on 28th May he gave the word to weigh, his fleet broke into open mutiny and refused to sail a yard. Two ships only remained true; and these were they that had learned first-hand of what sort the Admiral was. If Duncan had raised a finger the *Venerable* single-handed would have fought the whole of

the rest of the fleet. As for the *Adamant* she came to heel like a hound that has found the master of her choice.

The report that had come from the Foreign Office was only too well-founded. After their failure in Ireland, the French were minded to try some other port than Brest for embarkation. They had accordingly selected the Texel. General Hoche was there to take command. The number of troops was more than double the number employed in December. The figure was put by some at 35,000 men: and by no one lower than 30,000. Waiting to carry these were some fifty transports; and to escort them sixteen sail of the line and more than twenty frigates. Altogether at the end of May there were in the Texel ninety-five ships. And their preparations were complete.

In all the endeavours which hostile Powers had employed to invade the country there never had been at any time so inviting a prospect of success.

What was there to stand between England and invasion?

The *Times* of 31st May, after detailing the arrival at Sheerness of the various rebel vessels of the North Sea fleet, went on to say: "It is supposed that the Admiral himself will be brought to the Nore either this evening or to-morrow morning".

"Will be brought" is good.

. . . . . .

It was on the 1st of June that Duncan sighted the Texel and its swarm of ninety sail. The *Venerable* bore her colours bravely, and the faithful *Adamant* followed. But what were two against so many?

Duncan had not spent two years outside the Texel without learning all about it. He knew that the channel lay along the southern shore. He knew that it was extremely narrow and would hardly allow more than one ship at a time to pass from the anchorage to the sea. Here in the channel he stationed his ship. The "Venerables" had declared that they would shed the last drop of their blood for him. He bade them shed it for Britain. He called Captain Hotham to him and bade him anchor and fight the *Adamant* at his side. "I have taken the depth of the water," he said, "and when the *Venerable* goes down, my flag will be flying still."

"And you observe," writes Robert Louis Stevenson, "this is no

naked Viking in a prehistoric period; but a Scotch member of Parliament, with a smattering of the classics, a telescope, a cocked hat of great size and flannel underclothing."

Two ships to ninety-five!

There was humour in the situation even for those who shared in it. Humour lent its appeal to Duncan and showed him a way to outwit the Dutch. He had with him a frigate called *Circe*. She had come, it may be said, with some unwillingness. Her heart was with the men who had been turned into pigs. But Captain Halkett had two chairs placed on the quarter-deck, two chairs back to back. And in them for six days and six nights he and his first lieutenant sat with loaded carbines in their hands and pistols cocked in their belts. Through a week of awful suspense they sat there issuing commands with intent to kill the first who disobeyed. The company were spell-bound; mesmerized into submission.

Duncan sent the *Circe* to a fair offing to repeat his signals to the main body of the fleet which he made believe was stationed just beyond the horizon. The Dutch, who had been rather mystified by the appearance of two battleships in their very gateway at the particular moment when they were going to set out, had suspected trickery. Their suspicions were now confirmed. So likely that two British ships would come alone. The purposeful insolence of the *Venerable* and *Adamant* was a lure to entice them into the arms of an ambuscade. But Dutchmen were not taken in that way!

And still the signals fluttered at Duncan's masthead and still the *Circe* repeated them. A delightful game. The *Adamant* joined in it. She went away with her narrow pendant and returned with the broad pendant of a Commodore. Then she went and returned as a private ship. One day Duncan was visited by a flag-officer, rather a swell, it seemed, red at the mizen; anon by another, blue at the main. In all seeming, a rare dance. The *Circe* found the work of herald quite exhausting. She mustered thirty-seven of the line, if you please. The Channel Fleet, of course, thought the Dutch. The crisis certainly warranted it.

And so through those summer days of 1797 when Parker and his fellow-mutineers were holding the British capital in thrall: when ruin stared Britain in the face: when a Dutch fleet of nearly

twenty battleships and a French army of 30,000 men waited the favourable moment to cross the silver sea, one man by his sublime spirit saved an empire.

Fifteen sail were the Dutchmen bold,
Duncan he had but two:
But he anchored them fast where the Texel shoaled
And his colours aloft he flew.
"I've taken the depth to a fathom," he cried,
"And I'll sink with a right good will,
For I know when we're all of us under the tide,
My flag will be fluttering still."—NEWBOLT.

THE BATTLE OF CAMPERDOWN

OCTOBER 11, 1797

For five months Duncan maintained the blockade. It was not very long before the Admiralty were able to send him reinforcements, and in time these mounted up until the North Sea Fleet was of such proportions as set him wishing that the Dutch would come out and fight. But as autumn advanced there came news that the invasion enterprise had for the time been abandoned. With September too came the equinoctial gales and the squadron suffered severely. All the ships were sadly knocked about and it was evident that one or two would be obliged to repair to Chatham for an overhaul. Duncan demanded urgently that topmasts and topsail yards might be sent at once to Yarmouth.

On the first day of October he was back in the roads.

Exactly a week later the wind went round to the east and Admiral de Winter came out of the Texel with sixteen sail of the line. Why he came out cannot be said, for the military expedition which in June was ready had long ago dispersed. It may have been that, like De Ruyter of old, he was determined to carry the war into the enemy's country. But more probably he had agreed to meet the French at some other rendezvous; Brest perhaps, or even Bantry Bay. He worked to the south along the coast intending to put in at the mouth of the Meuse for an extra ship or two. Duncan had left on guard a few small ships, the frigate *Circe* among them. The very night on which De Winter put to sea, by her enchantments the *Circe* discovered him. She made herself one of his party in the coolest way to find out where he

was going: and to fetch the Admiral from Yarmouth she sent a clean-heeled little vessel called the *Speculator*.

The *Speculator* half-way over met two battleships. She flung them the news, told them where the *Circe* was, and sped on. Early in the morning of 9th October she reached her destination and delivered her message to Duncan. He was ready for it. He had never been ashore since his return. He had warned his fleet that the call would come suddenly. He had told them to be ready. The slowest of them took less than twenty-four hours to take in victuals. But Duncan was off before noonday. Some started with him. Others made haste to follow and joined him as he sailed.

Happily De Winter had not gone far: had not been able to go far. The ships in the Meuse were not ready for sea and imposed delay. Then there was the English frigate with the battleships that had joined her. Even supposing that they were but three, they were very much in the way. They accompanied the expedition like uninvited guests, and like mocking shadows kept just out of reach, whenever they were pursued. Nor was it at all certain that in number they were but three: to judge by signals, their friends were not far distant. When at length the wind went round to the west, favouring the approach of other Britons, De Winter deemed it wise to keep a port close under his lee.

Thus it came about that on 11th October he was not much more than thirty miles from the Texel.

The day of battle was a Wednesday. Duncan came on deck about six o'clock. The morning was unusually dark even for October: and the weather was lowering. The wind blew in squalls with occasional slats of rain. On the previous day Duncan had looked into the Texel, feeling sure that De Winter would return there. But the Dutch were still at sea, and now he stood away to the south in search of them. His course was parallel to the coast of Holland, which for all that was many miles distant. About seven the lookout sighted a sail on the lee bow. Soon they recognized the *Circe*. It would have been strange if she had not been signalling. But of course she was: wildly signalling, "Enemy's fleet to the east and south! Keeping away on the starboard tack! Inshore!"

At nine o'clock the mizen topsails of the Dutch were visible from

the deck of the *Venerable*. It was not, however, possible as yet to see very much. Duncan therefore hailed the *Circe* and bade her count the foe. She reported sixteen sail of the line; and as she did so De Winter swung his whole fleet round, and hauling his wind on the port tack stood north in line ahead. Duncan picked up the two battleships which had already done such valuable service, and proceeded to dispose his forces in the normal order of array. He had sixteen sail of the line, exactly the same number as the Dutch.

As Duncan proceeded to form his line he debated what his opponent's scheme could be. The wind was blowing from north-west and yet De Winter was meekly acquiescing in the leeward position. This was not normal behaviour in a Dutchman, to judge from the classic examples of the past. Yet De Winter was a formidable opponent. If he refused to skirmish for the wind, the chances were that he did not want it. The more Duncan thought about the matter, the more certain he became that De Winter was trusting in the shallow draught of his ships and the British ignorance of the coast. He was seeking conditions favourable to himself. Now the English were sailing à la Kempenfelt*; two lines-ahead in line abreast: and the change of this order into battle array could be made comparatively quickly. But the enemy were still afar off and Duncan was resolved to strike before they could play any pranks. There was no time left for evolutions. He must enter battle as he was.

About ten he hauled down the signal for the line and ordered a general chase. The risk, it must be understood, was considerable; for the enemy bore a reputation for fighting capacity at sea, unequalled by any nation in Europe. They were ready for battle and in orderly array: and their forces were equal to his own.

Off went the North Sea Fleet in its two columns of sailing. The direction was easterly, the line of advance at right angles to the foe. Duncan led the north or windwardmost squadron. The leewardmost was led by Admiral Onslow, a brave capable officer who had played his part with Howe in relieving Gibraltar, and stuck to Duncan all through the Mutiny. With a battle in prospect it was customary to stow in the hold all splintering articles: spare topmasts and spars, bulkheads, chairs and tables and hen-coops.

* See above, p. 130 (note).

But Duncan all haste heaved everything overboard, and as the furniture floated by them the vessels astern took the hint. They shook the reefs out of their topsails and set topgallants. The Dutch sailing with the wind abeam could carry no more than topsails: for the weather continued rough and blew in squalls.*

At eleven o'clock or thereabout the land became visible, a long low yellow strand: Egmont away to the south; Camperdown, a gable-end of rounded hill-tops, nearly opposite. By this time good progress had been made; but as was inevitable when speed of passage was preferred to other considerations, the head of each column was becoming bunched up, while the hinder part was tailing off disjointedly. This of course would never do against so skilled an antagonist, and Duncan shortened sail for a while to rectify his disordered line. Half an hour later he pushed on again, but his view of the enemy at closer range confirmed his suspicion of their cunning. To circumvent it, he adopted an instant resolve audacious enough to have satisfied Blake or won the approval of Hawke. Close as the Dutchmen were to the sands he determined to engage them on their landward side!

And first he must reach the landward side. To pass through the enemy was perilous enough with a fleet arranged in symmetrical line as Lord Howe's on the First of June. But Duncan stayed no longer to arrange his ships than he did to consider where the shoals began. He carried his force into battle in a manner that allowed the Dutch to defile in succession past the exposed ends of his own and Onslow's squadron! A ready acceptance of phenomenal risks was the mark of Adam Duncan.

The right wing led by Onslow in the *Monarch* was first to reach the Dutch. This was about half-past twelve. Duncan had already hoisted Lord Howe's signal to pass through the enemy and engage to leeward. He now added the signal for closer action. The Dutch in the face of such an attack were sailing with intervals somewhat too extended. De Winter signalled his ships to close up. But the signal was misunderstood; or if under-

* The spanker was some 300 square feet larger than the mizen topsail, but the main topsail and fore topsail were larger than the courses below them. The main topsail was the largest sail in the ship and in a first-rate measured 4500 square feet. If, that is to say, its shape had been square, each side would have been the length of a cricket-pitch.

stood, not obeyed. Onslow cut between the *Jupiter* and the *Haarlem*, fourth ship and third from the rear of De Winter's line. His first broadside was the prelude to the fiercest, bloodiest and most terrific battle at sea during the whole period of the Revolutionary War. For the Dutch in truth could fight. Their first two broadsides, so the British afterwards said, were appalling. The *Jupiter* (with the Dutch Vice-Admiral's flag) especially distin-

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guished herself. All testified to the magnificent way in which she was handled. The *Haarlem* made an excellent second. And yet for a while Onslow's *Monarch* fought the two and held her own. Then relief came. The *Powerful* followed the *Monarch* through the line and drew the *Haarlem's* fire.

Thus then two gory duels were being fought at the head of the British leeward squadron. Both *Monarch* and *Powerful* had drawn the fire of several ships as they shouldered their way into

the fight. Their condition was soon indescribable. But the ships astern of the *Powerful* came flying down the wind like angry stinging bees. They fetched the hostile line where they could: and Fortune befriended them, for they clustered on the last four ships of the Dutch and outnumbered them by two to one. But this undoubted advantage to the British right was achieved at the expense of the left. Between the point of Onslow's impact and the point for which Duncan was making there were six Dutch vessels left unmarked. Of these, two proved unworthy of their country and in the general preoccupation seized the moment to escape. But the other four, being stout-hearted ships, pressed on to assist De Winter and prepared an almost overwhelming fire for Duncan as he approached.

With all his arrangements made and nothing left but to cover the ground Duncan called all his officers on deck and in their presence knelt in prayer, committing himself and them with the cause they maintained to the sovereign protection of the Lord of Hosts.

As the *Venerable* ploughed her way through the surge the misty drizzle cleared away. The morning brightened and, though there was no sun, a white glare settled on the sea. One of his officers approached the Admiral and asked him whether he knew the number of the enemy. "Really, sir," Duncan replied, "I cannot exactly ascertain; but," he added consolingly, "when we have taken them we will count them." As he recognized his adversary's flag he turned to his officers and said: "Gentlemen, you see a severe *winter* approaching; I have only to advise you to keep up a good fire".

His intention was at once to strike the *Vrijheid*, De Winter's ship. But he was momentarily foiled by the action of the *States General* who made sail and pushed up hurriedly to close the interval. About eighteen minutes after the *Monarch* broke the line Duncan ran under the *States General's* stern, and then luffing engaged her to leeward. So forcefully he served his guns that at length the *States General* declined to continue so close an encounter and bore up. Duncan at once pushed on to engage the *Vrijheid*. But by this time the battle had developed. The *Wassenaar*, *Brutus* and the rest were moving up and circled Duncan in a ring. He lashed out with port and starboard guns: but the *Venerable* beyond doubt was hard pressed. One of the

midshipmen, not enjoying himself at all, tried to shelter himself by ducking. The Admiral noticed him. "Don't do that, my lad," he said kindly. "You might put your head in the way of a shot."

Before long the quarter-deck was swept of every living soul save the Admiral himself and his pilot. Duncan bore a charmed life, though his giant figure gave a broad enough target.

The *Ardent* suffered even more severely than the *Venerable*. She engaged the *Vrijheid* from the windward side while Duncan engaged from the other. But as De Winter's supporters came to his relief the *Ardent* found herself in a hornet's nest. She was rent in pieces. Her limbs were snatched from her. The sea was strewn with them. When the battle was over the carpenter's schedule of damages filled several sheets of paper. Whatever could be broken was broken. Whatever could be torn was torn. The *Ardent* suffered more casualties that day than any ship in either fleet. There were as many killed outright as wounded. The wounded were so shockingly mutilated that death was inevitable in every case. Yet there was never a word of surrender.

With *Venerable* and *Ardent* the *Triumph* bore her share. Her principal antagonist was the *Wassenaar*. After a bloody duel the *Wassenaar* surrendered. The *Triumph* did not wait to take possession. She pressed on to help the Admiral. When her back was turned, a little Dutch brig sailed up to the *Wassenaar* and bade her continue the fight. The *Wassenaar* did not feel like it. The brig therefore unlimbered her guns and fired into her sister's side till she hoisted her colours again.

The *Belliqueux* followed the *Triumph*. She was commanded by John Inglis, a veteran Scotch seaman of quick irascible temper. He had neglected to make himself master of the signal code and could not quite follow all that was in Duncan's mind. At last he closed the book and hurled it on the deck. Then shutting his telescope with a vicious snap he sang out to the master, "Dang it, Jock! Up with the hel-em and gang recht into the middle o't!" Into the very middle o't they went and eventually captured the *Brutus*. But as they stood on to Duncan's aid, the *Brutus* also, without persuasion, made free to rehoist her flag.

The casualties in these four ships, the *Venerable*, *Ardent*, *Triumph* and *Belliqueux* were equal in number to those in all the other ships combined. But such stout resistance undoubtedly won

the day. Had the four Dutch ships that Onslow surrounded held their own with courage equally unflinching, the battle might have gone differently. They fought manfully, but the weight of British metal at length prevailed, and all the four surrendered. This in itself was a grand piece of work. And, moreover, it released Onslow's column, which hastened to Duncan's aid. As they did so they saw to northward leaping flames and belching smoke fanned into swirling pillars by the wind. The word went round that it was the Admiral's ship and they raced the more quickly lest their help should come too late.

The burning vessel was not the *Venerable*, but the *Hercules*, a Dutch ship, third in the line. Her company turned from the Britons to fight the flames. They brought up the powder from the magazines and pushed it through the gun-deck ports. In doing so they denied themselves further resistance and in the end the ship proved an easy prey. But meantime the conflagration threatened danger to those astern. They halted; and halting gave the British right wing time enough to overtake them.

The interest now centred round De Winter's ship, the *Vrijheid*. She fought in magnificent style and never better than towards the end when the number of her opponents multiplied. Foremost among newcomers was Captain Bligh; "Bread-Fruit Bligh of the Bounty"; he who was set adrift in strange south seas while his men returned to the allurements of the pleasant sun-kissed isles. Bligh laid his ship with exemplary skill on the *Vrijheid's* larboard quarter and, without losing a man himself, poured round after round into his foe. So long as there was hope De Winter fought: but when all his masts were gone, when a tangle of wreckage lay over the side, he knew that his ship would never see home again. All who set foot upon his quarter-deck were killed: all, that is, except himself. An enormous man as big as Duncan, like Duncan he remained untouched. Though he longed for a bullet to end his miseries, lead and iron alike refused to touch him.

When the captain of the *Circe* came aboard he found De Winter helping the carpenter to patch a wretched little punt in which he hoped to reach another ship. The brave Dutchman was carried by the *Circe* to the *Venerable;* and the Battle of Camperdown ended. It was about half-past three o'clock.

As De Winter came on board the British flagship and saw the

figure waiting him upon the quarter-deck, he could not forbear an exclamation. "It is a matter of marvel," he said, "that two such gigantic objects as Admiral Duncan and myself should have escaped the general carnage of this day." Then he drew his sword and tendered it to the conqueror. "I would rather take a brave man's hand than his sword," said Admiral Duncan. Yet for all that the Dutchman's sword is still at Camperdown House at Lundie in Forfar: and at the gable-end stands the figure-head of De Winter's ship, the lion of Holland, red and rampant, that struggled so nobly to keep its head above water. And there is another memento that tells its story of brave honest hearts. This is a miniature of De Winter. It was painted at the Dutchman's own command on purpose for his victorious opponent. On the back in his own hand he wrote: "Admiral de Winter, Commander of the Dutch fleet defeated by Admiral Duncan, 11 October, 1797".

De Winter was straightforward, simple and generous. The moment he found himself in Duncan's company he cast aside all reserve and, before darkness set in, the two were intimate friends. It was impossible by the admission of all to remain in Duncan's company long without falling under the spell of his genial kind-hearted nature. De Winter was soon pouring out his heart. "Only one thing hurt him," he said. "He was the first Dutch Admiral that ever surrendered." Duncan comforted him. "I have assured him," he wrote in his public dispatch, "that nothing could exceed his gallantry."

When the action was over and hands could be spared Duncan ordered his company on deck and in the presence of De Winter "again upon his bended knees solemnly, with fervour and humility, offered up praise to the God of Battles for his success".

And now there was a movement in the British fleet. One by one the vessels passed under the *Venerable's* stern; and as they passed, they raised three cheers for the leader that every man honoured. As Admiral Onslow passed, Duncan stepped into the stern gallery and in a voice distinctly heard above the noise of wind and sea he thanked his second sincerely for his brilliant share in the victory.

Then he went back into the cabin and played a game of piquet with De Winter,

The battle of Camperdown was one of the most grandly contested battles. To say that it is worthy to rank beside the conflicts of Blake and Tromp, or De Ruyter and Albemarle is to award high praise, but not too high. It certainly was utterly unlike the battles with French and Spaniards. In the Dutch ships the rigging was clotted with blood and bråins: more than this may not be said. The captured ships were so pommelled and riddled that from the first it was seen that never again would they be serviceable. Indeed it was a problem how to get them across to England: and though the utmost care was taken, one of them sank by the way.

The English suffered no less. Small though the number of their ships, their casualties were all but as numerous as they were on the "First of June". The *Venerable*, it is said, would have lost fewer men, but that every time a Dutchman surrendered, the gun-crews thronged round the port-holes to give a British cheer. But grisly as the cock-pits were and grisly the state of the decks,* the state of the ships themselves was, to one who had seen warfare with the French, still more remarkable. The injuries were not aloft, but in the hulls. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the battle was the number of shot-holes between wind and water. The action, it must be remembered, was fought in a stiffish breeze, and the vessels as they rolled in the waves exposed their vital parts. The *Venerable* received forty-five wounds below the water-line. She made twenty-five inches of water in twenty minutes. With chain and hand pumps going busily she could hardly be kept afloat. It took six days and six nights to carry her from the battle-field to the Gunfleet.

A mere comparison of injuries might make the battle appear indecisive. But the wars of the seventeenth century had proved that in an Anglo-Dutch encounter the only reliable test of results was the percentage of vessels taken. At the battle of Camperdown Duncan captured eleven prizes. Of these two were frigates and may therefore be omitted from the reckoning. Without them Duncan's capture accounted for nearly sixty per cent of the force opposed to him. Better than this had never been done, not even by Hawke at Finisterre. Scheveningen was not more decisive,

* The interiors of the ships were almost invariably painted red so that blood-stains might be less noticeable. This custom is said to have been introduced by Robert Blake.

St. James's Day not more complete. And whichever way the result is looked at there is satisfaction. If the Dutch were equal to the Britons in fighting power, and in their ships of identical strength, they were yet superior in the advantage that Duncan allowed them by the manner of his coming down. The British advanced in Indian file. Theoretically they ought not to have had a chance. The head of each column should have been annihilated before the rearguard came into action.

Specific instances have been given of ships that were taken and afterwards escaped. If the facts were known there is good reason to believe that all the Dutch were at one time taken except those which at the outset ran away. But enough and more than enough had been done. The capture of the Dutch Commander-in-Chief, of two flagships, of three flag-officers and nine battleships was enough to remove for the rest of the war all further menace on the North Sea coasts.

Very notable was the effect of the battle among the Dutch. There was no cry for revenge; no desire to fight England again. The wrath of the people was turned upon France, upon France who had stolen their fleet, who had sucked their life blood, who had made them worse than slaves "in the name of Batavian liberty".

The whole campaign was over in such record time that the news was bound to come with startling suddenness. The east coast towns were the first to hear it. At Sunderland it came on Sunday just when all were at church. There was of course no holding it back. At St. John's they had just reached a pause in the service when the north door was pushed rudely open and a man's voice bawled out, "Admiral Duncan has defeated the Dutch at Camperdown! Eleven prizes!" However glorious the news, its pronouncement was unseemly: for every one wanted to cheer. An awkward moment was saved by the organist who played "Rule Britannia!" in an impressive manner while the congregation remained standing. After that prayers were quietly resumed.

Mr. Pitt was dining at Walmer when the news was delivered. It was a quiet little party; himself, Mr. and Mrs. Dundas and Mr. Fordyce. They were pledging one another in a glass of wine when a seafaring man came rather abruptly into the room. He said

that he had just come on shore from his vessel. He had returned from the coast of Holland where he had witnessed the victory with his own eyes. He mentioned the number of prizes and showed how the line was broken. Mr. Pitt and his guests were delighted and sent their informant on his way rejoicing. Mr. Pitt discussed the news in all its bearings; and at length inquiring from his servants who the messenger was, found to his horror that he had lavishly rewarded the most brazen bare-faced smuggler left unhung.

On 16th October Duncan anchored with his prizes at the Nore. The affectionate warmth with which he was welcomed must have done his heart good. The moment he arrived the King created him Baron Duncan of Lundie, and Viscount Duncan of Camperdown.* His Majesty was pleased also to honour him with armorial augmentations. The shield of the Duncans had till now been supported by a pair of eagles. These were replaced by a sailor holding the Union Jack and a mermaid with scaly tail. The royal party were anxious to proceed to the Nore and inspect the triumphant fleet as they had inspected Howe's after the First of June; but the weather grew boisterous and prevented the journey. In December King George and the Royal Family attended a thanksgiving at St. Paul's. There was a gorgeous procession. The streets were crowded and Duncan received a vociferous ovation. In the cathedral were gathered together all the élite of the four kingdoms. Society and the stage sent their most brilliant members. Literature and art contributed their noblest names. The aisles were packed with glittering uniforms. All eyes turned to the man whom all desired to see. But Duncan was quite unconscious of the homage, for his head and his alone was bent in prayer.

Further honours fell thickly. The Houses of Parliament voted their thanks and when the Admiral took his seat in the Lords they praised him to his face. The City, not to be behindhand, conferred its freedom upon him and upon his second, now Sir Richard Onslow, Bart. The Lord Mayor insisted on his presence at the Guildhall banquet, and the East India Company gave him a complimentary dinner. Mr. Pitt was present and Lord Hood and Admiral Nelson. Sir Walter Scott wrote a commemorative ode,

* In 1831 Admiral Duncan's son was advanced a step in the peerage and chose to be known as Earl of Camperdown.

but Lord Wellesley's effort was judged to be finer. Those who were not able to see the Admiral in person thronged to Drury Lane, where the Christmas attraction was a model of the *Venerable*, floating like a sea-gull on a crystal sea with her rigging full of lamps.

All this and much more Duncan himself could never understand. He set it down to the inherent goodness and affability of mankind. He could not and would not take to himself the credit for what he had done. It was in rather a commonplace search for food that he learned at last the penalties of greatness. He was hungry and went with a friend to dine at a restaurant in Covent Garden. The place was well filled. It appears to have been fashionable. Among others Sheridan was present. Whether the Admiral had appeased his appetite cannot be said. But suddenly at a table near him one who had been regarding him attentively for some time sprang to his feet and mounting the table cried out, "Gentlemen, fill your glasses! Admiral Duncan is present!" Such a hubbub followed. The room rang with cheers. For the only time in his life Admiral Duncan was a little disconcerted. He rose from his seat. The tumult lulled and was succeeded by the silence of admiration. No one ever looked the hero as Duncan did. His features were nobly beautiful, his forehead high and fair, and his waving hair was as white as snow. They looked for a speech and he made one. "Gentlemen, I thank you!" That was all, but the most mellifluous oratory could not have evoked wilder enthusiasm. There was nothing for it but to fly. At the door they called for a hackney carriage. The noise within had filled the street. The carriage came: but as the Admiral endeavoured to fit his enormous bulk into its narrow limits, the crowd unhitched the horses and harnessed themselves to the shafts. Then they dragged him with cheers round Covent Garden. Round they went and round again: and when arms were tired and lungs exhausted with cheers they carried him home.

Although Duncan had won the most decisive victory ever gained over the Dutch, he did not consider his work complete while the Dutch had any ships afloat. He once more repaired to the Texel and mounted guard. But the Dutch were deeply embittered against the war, and the Dutch sailors preferred by far to

fight with Britons rather than against them. In the summer of 1799 the British North Sea Fleet landed at the Helder 12,000 troops under General Abercromby. These quickly mastered the works that overlooked the Texel and then the British ships stood in. The Dutchmen stoutly refused to fight; would not even man the guns. The Admiral commanding was obliged to haul down his flag and twenty-five ships of war passed into the hands of Britain. The States General declared their commander to be infamous. They passed on him a sentence of perpetual banishment. But this final blow was injurious rather to French policy than to Dutch prestige. The Navy of Holland was invaluable to France and in a single afternoon it had passed completely out of existence.

This surrender of the Dutch fleet was the closing episode in the life of Admiral Duncan. He now enjoyed contentedly the placid retirement of his home and in 1800 wrote to the First Lord that an old fellow like himself ought to hoist his flag only by his own fireside. But he could not sit quietly when his country was in trouble, and when the arrogance of Napoleon plunged Europe into war again he resolved to offer his services. With this end he travelled to London; but when he got there, he found that his health was not sufficiently robust to endure the rigours of a new campaign. Therefore after a rest he turned north again.

On 4th August, 1804, he arrived about nightfall at Cornhill, a little village on the border. He ate a moderate dinner and took his customary pint of wine. About ten he retired to bed in the best of spirits, pleased to think that on the following day he would be home. But he had not been in bed above an hour when he rang for his servant. The servant, finding him in pain, administered a sedative and returned to his room. Presently the Admiral rang again. He was worse: and they sent to Coldstream for assistance. Before a doctor could be brought, he was gone. His end was very peaceful. To the kind-hearted landlady he whispered his regret that he could not say good-bye to those he loved.

. . . . . .

A month or two later the *Venerable*, refusing to outlive her master, went down in a winter gale.

NELSON

BORN 1758—DIED 1805

In the eyes of the world the one unrivalled thunderbolt that England has forged.—ROSEBERY.

He leads; we hear our Seaman call
In the roll of battles won;
For he is Britain's Admiral
Till setting of the sun. —MEREDITH.

THOSE who make a pilgrimage to Nelson shrines row out to the *Victory* in Portsmouth harbour or visit the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral. Burnham Thorpe, within easy reach of crowded watering-places, Cromer and Sheringham and Hunstanton, is left unvisited. The centuries have made but little change. It remains to-day the perfect picture of an old-time country village; with old grey church and village green, one straggling street, and swelling meadowlands with fringe of trees and dumpy straw-built cattle-sheds. Due north some three miles from the churchyard wall is the sandy coast washed by the rolling north sea waves.

Nelson was born at Burnham Thorpe on 29th September, 1758. His father was vicar of the parish. His mother was a sister of that Captain Suckling who commanded the *Dreadnought* so pluckily in the fight off Cap François and made the "Twenty-first of October" a red-letter day in the family annals a year before Nelson was born. From his father Nelson derived his stern code of honour and exalted sense of duty; from his mother he inherited a weak frame and a burden of ill-health which he was seldom able completely to shake off. Nelson's father lived to congratulate his "dear Rear-Admiral" on the victory of the Nile: but his mother, to Nelson's lasting grief, died when he was but nine years old.

Nelson came sixth in a family of eleven. He had four brothers

and one sister older than himself. His kinsman, Lord Walpole of Wollerton, consented to stand sponsor and gave his godson the Walpole name, Horatio. This was never popular with the young people. They preferred Horace, but the vicar always insisted on the baptismal name, at least for signatures. When nursery days were over Nelson first attended the Grammar School at Norwich and afterwards went to North Walsham. Here the visitor may still inspect the initials he carved on the wall: while in a school-room hung with Nelson prints there is still pointed out the exact position which he occupied; midway between the fireplace and the door, on the right as one enters the room.

It was while Nelson was at North Walsham that he received his call to the sea. Captain Suckling had offered to provide for one of his many nephews and Horatio at his own express desire was chosen. At twelve years of age he was small and undersized; he was fragile and sickly. He would have had no chance of passing the Navy medical examination of the present day. But his spirit was not as the spirit of other boys. He was old for his years with a quite grown-up idea of the work that a man must do in the world. He was eager to begin as soon as possible. The rest of the family were sensible of his physical unfitness for the sea service with all its hardships and discomforts. Captain Suckling was amazed. But as in after days, so now; Horatio Nelson bore down all opposition. By sheer importunity he got his way. And one cold dark morning towards the end of 1770 a messenger arrived at North Walsham to carry him home at once. There were insistent rumours of war and Captain Suckling was commissioning a ship.

The vicar accompanied his son upon the first stage of his journey. The two travelled together to London but, after seeing Horatio into the Chatham coach, the father returned to Burnham and Nelson went on alone. It was a most disconsolate little figure that at last reached Chatham. There was no one to meet him, and Nelson wandered about the streets trying to find H.M.S. *Raisonnable*. He did not know where he ought to go and was too independent to ask. At last he was found by a friendly officer who had compassion on him, gave him a meal and sent him on his way worlds happier. But things were no better when he reached the ship. He was not expected. His uncle was ashore. Not a soul took any note of him. He crouched beside a gun

watching with wide eyes the meaningless motions of the company as they worked to get the ship ready for sea. It was not until his second day on board that they paid him any attention.

The war, for which the *Raisonnable* was commissioned, never took place after all. But Nelson was embarked on his profession: and his uncle with conscientious zeal set to work to educate him. For seamanship he sent him in a merchantman for a cruise to the West Indies, and when he returned put him on to navigation. This was dull work for the most part, but by way of reward for his industry Nelson was permitted to command the cutter and decked long-boat when these were sent to the North Foreland or the Tower. By degrees he became a trustworthy pilot for the mouth of the Thames, and gained a confidence in himself amongst rocks and shoals which in after years was of the greatest comfort to him.

Two years after his entrance into the Navy, when he was fourteen and a half years of age, a polar expedition was projected by the Government. Two strong little bomb-vessels were chosen as suitable for the purpose and put under the charge of Captain Phipps, R.N. Nelson was intent on going and never gave his uncle a moment's peace until he had promised to use all his influence to secure a berth for him. This was eventually found on board the *Carcass* (Captain Lutwidge). No "boys" were included in the expedition and Nelson was only accepted on the understanding that he should do a man's work. He signed on as Captain's coxswain. The two vessels made many useful observations, worked their way within ten degrees of the Pole and were finally caught in the clutches of the ice to the North of Spitzbergen. The hulls were frozen immovably, the ice-pack was thrust as high as the mainyard, and after vain endeavours to cut a channel to the open sea it was finally agreed to abandon the ships. Preparations for flight were made, but while the boats, heavily laden with provisions, were being dragged laboriously over the floes, the ships with all sails set began at last to move and at length reached home in safety.

It was while the *Carcass* was wedged in the ice that Nelson had his adventure with the bear. As a rule the nights were clear, but on one occasion the fog came up and hung a curtain round the ship. Under cover of this Nelson, attended by a midshipman,

went forth without permission in pursuit of game. In time they came upon a polar bear. Nelson raised his musket: but the weapon flashed in the pan and left the hunter defenceless. Nelson's companion counselled immediate retreat, but Nelson grasped his gun by the barrel. "Do but let me get a blow at the devil with the butt-end of my musket," he said, "and we shall have him." At this moment the fog lifted and revealed an exciting picture to those on board—the huge beast faced by the scrap of a boy with clumsy musket poised like a felling-axe. Captain Lutwidge ordered a gun to be discharged, and the animal, alarmed by the noise, made off; but had it not been for a rift in the ice which prevented the bear from closing, England might have sighed in vain for one to deliver her from Napoleon. When the hunters returned to the ship Captain Lutwidge sent for them. He looked for the usual faltering accents of errant midshipmen, but in answer to a demand for explanations Nelson replied with a dignity worthy of Dr. Johnson, "Sir, I desired to kill the bear that I might carry his skin to my father".

Through the kind offices of his uncle Nelson soon after his return was included in another peace expedition, and sailed in the *Seahorse* to India. He was entered on the books as able seaman but was soon transferred to the quarter-deck as midshipman. He visited the whole coast of the Peninsula, and found a lifelong friend in Thomas Troubridge. But under the Indian sun his constitution broke down. He shrank to a skeleton, began to lose the use of his limbs and was invalided home. He was angry with himself for being sick, and as he thought of his professional prospects was filled with depression and anxiety. But the voyage restored him and he arrived to find the American War in its second year and his uncle Controller of the Navy. Though still in his teens he sat for his Lieutenant's examination and passed with flying colours.

EARLY SERVICES

CHAPTER I. DURING THE AMERICAN WAR, 1775-1783

He was at once appointed to the *Lowestoft*, a fine frigate of thirty-two guns * commanded by Captain Locker, a favourite disciple of

* A thirty-two gun frigate was considered the best school for an active young officer.

Lord Hawke. The *Lowestoft* proceeded to the West Indies, the main theatre of the war; and kept wide open a watchful eye for the mischievous privateer. There were several smart little vessels about with letters of marque from the Philadelphian Congress, and on one occasion Locker snapped up a prize. The wind was very wild at the time and there was a very heavy sea. The first lieutenant set off with a prize-crew but was soon flung back. He could make nothing of it. Meanwhile the boat swung alongside and the angry water threatened every minute to dash it to pieces against the frigate's timbers. Out of patience Captain Locker called out, "Have I no officer in the ship who can board the prize?" whereupon the master immediately ran up to the gangway, and would have entered the boat, but Nelson was before him. "It is my turn now," he said, "and if I return, it will be yours." Needless to say he did not come back. The prize was so completely water-logged that Nelson's boat went in and out again with the sea; but he boarded her at last, and more than that he carried her into port.

Locker brought him before the notice of Sir Peter Parker, Commander-in-Chief of the Jamaica Station, a man famed in two hemispheres for unflinching valour. Parker promoted Nelson to be lieutenant in his flagship, the *Bristol*. He became warmly attached—as indeed did every one—to the young officer; and Nelson rapidly rose from third lieutenant to first. At the conclusion of 1778 he was appointed Commander of a brig, a two-masted square-rigged vessel called the *Badger*. In those times the gun-brig filled a position which to-day is taken by the destroyer. She was the greyhound of the fleet. Cruising off the north-west corner of Jamaica Nelson discovered another brig that by accident had been set on fire. Approaching without hesitation he assumed the direction of affairs. He ordered the powder to be brought from below and thrown overboard. He pointed the guns upward to shield his rescue parties. Then he brought his boats alongside and by his promptitude and coolness conveyed every one into safety. On 11th June, 1779, though it wanted yet three months to his twenty-first birthday, Nelson was by Sir Peter Parker made post into the *Hinchinbrook*, a small frigate of twenty-four guns.

About this time the Spaniards began to take a part in the war and the Governor of Jamaica conceived a project which should

"distress the enemy in their very vitals". The scheme was directed like those of Drake and Vernon against a part of Central America. An expedition was to advance up the San Juan River and capture the fort that commanded the entrance to Lake Nicaragua.* The moment he heard of the plan Nelson in his impetuous way volunteered; and to his joy the *Hinchinbrook* was selected. His part in the expedition was properly quite small. He had to conduct the army to the Mosquito coast and see that they were not molested on the way. But Nelson was never content merely with doing the bare minimum of duty. When the River San Juan was reached in the spring of 1780 he decided to push on with the soldiers. He was ready for anything; difficulties seemed to vanish at his approach; and when at last progress was barred by a fortified island in mid-stream he and his blue-jackets "carried it by boarding". In seventeen days the fort was reached and if Nelson's advice had been taken it would probably have yielded at once to a bold direct assault. But the military invested the place in form and as the days slipped by the horrors of the country declared themselves. The blazing sun blinded the invaders. The torrential rains soaked them to the skin. The waters were brackish, the plants poisonous. Beautiful fruits tempted men to their death and venomous reptiles slew them as they slept. The unwholesome miasma of the tropical forest invaded the brain like a nightmare, and though the indomitable pluck of the Briton prevailed at length, Fort San Juan had in the end to be abandoned, for there were not enough men left to hold it. Of 1800 who ascended the river 300 cadaverous-looking creatures crawled back; of 200 seaman from the *Hinchinbrook* 190 were buried. Happily for England Sir Peter Parker watched over Nelson, and the very day before the fort surrendered got through to him a message of recall. Already the climate had played havoc with Nelson's health and when he reached Jamaica he could no longer hold up his head. He had no reserve of bodily strength to draw upon and for long he hovered on the verge. But Lady Parker tended him with a mother's care and saved him by superlative nursing. When he was sufficiently strong to be moved Sir Peter sent him

* The route thus marked out follows one of the great natural roadways between Atlantic and Pacific and was at one time suggested as the most feasible course for an Isthmian canal.

home to England. There was at Jamaica a battleship very badly in need of a complete overhaul—the *Lion*, fresh from her exploit in the battle that Byron fought. Her captain, the jolly-faced "Billy-go-tight," took charge of the wasted hero and nothing could have been more tender than his solicitude during the voyage. Nelson always said that he owed his life to Cornwallis, and between the two there sprang up a warm affectionate friendship.

When Nelson reached home in the autumn of 1780 he was little more than a wreck. For months he lay in a precarious condition. His left side was to all intents paralysed; his left arm hung helplessly from the shoulder like a useless weight. In this condition he was conveyed to Bath. He was quite incapable of moving by himself, but they physicked him three times a day and three times a day he drank the waters and was dipped in a chalybeate bath. It is doubtful whether the treatment accelerated his recovery: it certainly involved excruciating pain. Yet even on a sick-bed the attraction of his manner charmed the hearts of those who attended him, and the doctor who set him on the high road to recovery resolutely refused to receive the usual fees. At the beginning of 1781 he was still exceedingly ill, but his spirit had returned and though physically incapable of hurting a fly he applied at once for further employment.

In August he was appointed to another small frigate of twenty-eight guns, the *Albemarle*. She was very far from being a model craft. She was crank; she was slack in stays; and her masts were too long. But Nelson would always make allowances for a ship, if the men were the right sort. And with him the men always were the right sort. It was his nature to seek the best there was in every one, and in seeking for good qualities he as often as not created them. No man dared to be a coward when the captain believed him a hero; no one had the heart to be a villain when the captain believed him a saint, especially when the captain aforesaid went out of his way to see that everybody on board was happy and contented. One is reminded of Joan of Arc entering Orleans with her spotless banner upraised, greeting the thirsty swashbucklers as if they were paladins and mothering them into men.*

Nelson was kept waiting for weeks before he received his

* In the seven volumes of Nelson's letters there is no word of complaint against any of his officers or any of his men.

sailing orders, and at length was given instructions to convoy the trade to the Baltic; an unpleasant task for anyone in midwinter and for Nelson wearing every appearance of a deliberate attempt to see how much his frail little body could bear. The journey, however, was not a wasted one, for Nelson gained a close acquaintance with the approach to Copenhagen, that proved invaluable in after days.

On returning to England Nelson dropped anchor in the Downs and went ashore to report himself. During his absence a storm arose. Almost all the vessels began to drag their cables and a merchantman drifted athwart the bows of the *Albemarle*. At this point Nelson reappeared and at once decided to join his ship. The fishermen of Deal declared that they could not launch a boat, and that even if they launched a boat she could not live in such a sea. Nelson pulled out all the gold he had with him and for fifteen guineas found men willing to risk their all. Time and again the spectators on shore vowed that the boat was gone, but she swam like a cork over gulping waves and reached the ship at last. Bowsprit and foremast were cut away, and the *Albemarle* was saved.

While Nelson by sickness and petty commissions was detained on this side of the Atlantic events had moved swiftly on the other. The fatal battle of the Chesapeake had been fought and the dominion of North America had passed from the keeping of Britain. Now through the snoring winter breeze which Nelson defied in a fishing smack, the greatest sailor of the day set forth to win the Battle of The Saints. How much would not Nelson have given to accompany him! Instead he was bidden to carry the trade to Quebec and Newfoundland. To his friends it seemed highly improbable that he would ever survive the icy cold of Canada; but he refused to allow them to interfere on his behalf, declaring like Benbow of old that it was none of his business to take account of climates hot and cold, but without regard to conditions to serve his country and King. His cheerfulness met an appropriate reward, for the climate of Canada suited him admirably.

When his work in the St. Lawrence was complete Nelson sailed to New York and here he was fortunate in meeting one of the Navy's greatest sons. Lord Hood was then in the very hey-day of his fame. The reputation he had won by his matchless

manœuvres in Frigate Bay had been enhanced by his brilliant share in the Battle of The Saints: and Rodney's recall left him the ablest sailor in American waters. Nelson, ever ready to offer incense to talent, became an ardent worshipper. Lord Hood he afterwards declared "the greatest sea officer I ever knew . . . equally great in all situations which an admiral can be placed in". Nothing would suit him, when the hurricane season was over, but to accompany Lord Hood to the West Indies. It was pointed out to him that the North American station was before all others the station for prize-money. Nelson brushed the suggestion indignantly aside. "The West Indies is the station for Honour," he exclaimed. Lord Hood would hardly have been human if he had been proof against such flattery. He carried Nelson away with him and daily admitted him into closer communion and fellowship. It may safely be affirmed that he was the earliest to discern the immense possibilities in the enthusiastic young captain who paid him such devoted homage, and it is equally certain that from his teaching Nelson derived no small part of his inspiration. It was Hood who inculcated that fiery principle which Nelson afterwards so triumphantly asserted, that the task of a British Admiral is but poorly done so long as a unit of the enemies' fleet escapes alive to tell the story.

There was at this time on board the flagship *Barfleur* another very distinguished personality. This was the Duke of Clarence, afterwards King William IV. Hood was responsible for the Prince's nautical education, and was careful to have him instructed in every branch of his profession, gunnery, seamanship and navigation. For tactics the Duke was sent not to any experienced man in a fleet of veterans, but to the young captain who was but now in his second frigate. As a sidelight on Nelson's abilities and Hood's opinion of them, this single fact is most illuminating.

As far as active service was concerned Nelson might have stayed in North America, for in 1783 the war was ended by the treaty of Versailles. In the summer Nelson was home again and prepared to sever his connexion with the *Albemarle*. But the *Albemarle* did not want to part with him. There were on board men who for eleven years had served at sea continuously without a chance of setting foot on shore. Yet every man in the ship without a single exception volunteered to enter for any vessel to which their captain

might be appointed. Nelson did what he could to secure them their arrears of pay, but he did not at once apply for a new ship. Instead he passed over to France and for two months he slaved for hours every day in an effort to learn the language of his enemies.

When Nelson returned from France, Lord Hood graciously showed him signal marks of favour. He presented him at the King's levee and procured him the command of the frigate *Boreas*. In the year succeeding the peace * Nelson sailed for the Leeward Isles having on board a number of midshipmen. Among them there was at least one who fought shy of climbing to the mast-head. In most ships there would have been short shrift for timidity. But where the feelings of others were concerned Nelson always displayed the utmost tenderness. Instead of scolding he issued the young officer an invitation to meet him up aloft. Then while the nervous midshipman crawled up the windward shrouds he himself raced up the lee, and, welcoming his guest at the top, spoke to him cheerily and invited his pity for those foolish souls who could fancy there was danger in the ascent, or even anything disagreeable.

A peace appointment on the Leeward station offered a prospect sufficiently dull, but excitement followed fast in Nelson's wake. The war just concluded had changed the American colonists into foreigners. As such they were, by the law of the time, cut off from all share in British trade, and in theory at least debarred from intercourse with the West India Islands. This result was lamented not only at Boston and Savannah but at Nevis and St. Kitts and, as a natural consequence, the commerce that could not be conducted openly was conducted in underhand ways. Everybody connived at the breach of the law—governors, naval men and administrators. There was money to be made and the only sufferer was the dignity of a snuffy old statute book. But Nelson would not look at things in this light. Either the law was wrong or it was right. If it was wrong, why had it not been abrogated? If right, it must then be enforced; and himself he resolved to enforce it. He met with strenuous opposition from all sides. The Governor of St. Kitts, a choleric old man, lost his temper. "Old generals," he blazed, "are not in the habit of taking advice from young gentlemen!" "I have the honour, sir," Nelson quietly replied, "of being as old

* May, 1784.

as the Prime Minister of England, and think myself as capable of commanding one of his Majesty's ships as that Minister is of governing the State."

More serious was the retaliation of the traders. They saw that the feeling of the colonies was with them and they determined to bring a case before the courts. They cast their damages at £40,000: but the first Lieutenant of the *Boreas* was too clever for them and they endeavoured in vain to serve a writ. None the less, things were unpleasant for Nelson. He was kept in voluntary durance in his ship, knowing that, if ever he set foot on shore, he would in that same moment be impounded. A sympathetic officer ventured to express his pity. "Pity!" said Nelson in a scornful voice, "I shall live, sir, to be envied!"

"The Captain of the *Boreas*" became the most talked-of man in the islands, and his sterling rectitude won him a host of admirers among those who did not consider honesty old-fashioned. It was at this time that Nelson formed the most enduring friendship of his life. He had met Cuthbert Collingwood before. He had shared with him the favours of Sir Peter Parker. But it is in adversity that a man learns in whom to trust and Collingwood stood by him now with faithful fearlessness. In the end the matter was referred home, and right was vindicated. But as if to put the crown on Nelson's hardships the thanks of the King were transmitted not to the ambitious young captain who had risked all to satisfy his conscience, but to the superior who from first to last had deliberately sanctioned what was wrong.

While Nelson was in the neighbourhood of St. Kitts word came to him that a French mission was about to make a survey of the British islands. Resolved to stop such a proceeding, Nelson sought the intruders and expressed to them the pleasure he derived from the friendly feeling that had brought them into British waters. The Frenchmen of course were equally polite, and thanked him much for his hospitality. Then without appearing to be rude they tried their hardest to shake him off. But Nelson would not be shaken off. Nothing he said would give him greater joy than to show them everything, and escort them whithersoever they went. Nay; it was no trouble at all. It was the very least that he could do! At length the Frenchmen made a bolt for it and tried to lose their host. But Nelson was ready for all their tricks and after

a while the survey mission abandoned their attempt and retired to Martinique.

For the latter half of his commission Nelson was left senior officer upon the Leewards Station, and enjoyed for a while the dignity of an independent command. During this period Prince William came out as commander of the frigate *Pegasus* and put himself under Nelson's orders. The two became fast friends and when in the spring of 1787 Nelson was married to a young widow Mrs. Nisbet, niece of the President of Nevis, Prince William very graciously insisted on giving the bride away. A few months after the wedding Nelson returned to England, his term of office over. Throughout his three years as captain of the *Boreas* he had looked after every man on board with a care and an interest for which it would be difficult to find a parallel even in the lives of Anson, Howe and Duncan. He had made life pleasant for them. He had done what he could to make the rations palatable. He had varied their employment and provided amusements and harmless relaxation. As a result not a single life was lost from the beginning of the cruise to the end; and the feeling of the company for their commander was something very different from ordinary respect. They worshipped the very planks on which he trod.

CHAPTER II. THE AGAMEMNON. 1793-1796

Five years elapsed before Nelson again saw service afloat. He took up his quarters during this period at the parsonage, Burnham Thorpe. He lived a simple country life; digging in the garden, rambling with the dogs, or inspecting the dairy and farmyard. He bought a pony and carried a fowling-piece. Once he shot a partridge: but all agreed that this was an accident. And then a great part of each day he set apart for study. He read widely. He studied charts and made plans. However swift and unlooked-for may have been his lightning strokes in war, the brilliant inspiration of a moment was begotten of close devotion to study.

But Nelson could not really be happy long at home. The sea called him; and when there came rumours of war he besought Whitehall for a commission. "If your lordships," he wrote pathetically on one occasion, "should be pleased to appoint me to a cockle-boat, I shall feel grateful." He was at this time still

unknown to the world at large, but the Admiralty were by no means unconscious of his worth, and the moment the war of the French Revolution broke out they made him an offer. If he willed it, he might have a sixty-four at once: but in any case he should not long be kept waiting for a seventy-four. Nelson clutched feverishly at the smaller ship, and in January, 1793, was appointed to the *Agamemnon*, his first and best-loved battleship.

If he had waited for his seventy-four he might have sailed with Lord Howe and fought alongside of Collingwood on the Glorious First of June. But the *Agamemnon* was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet and as Lord Hood was nominated to the chief command no other billet could have given him an equal satisfaction.

The Western Mediterranean in the summer of 1793 offered a cordial welcome to the British fleet. The Pope was vehemently opposed to Jacobinism; and so were almost all the Italian States. Spain was a fellow-member with England in the alliance against France, and to swell Lord Hood's armada sent a fleet of twenty-four ships. The ill-fated house of Bourbon still claimed a following on the Mediterranean coast, and at Toulon numbered many supporters in the dockyard, arsenal and fleet. The British Government cherished a hope that the pressure exerted by Lord Hood would force this invaluable base to declare for the *ancien régime*.

Hood exerted pressure and blockaded the harbour strictly. The hungry citizens clamoured for food and negotiations were opened. Lord Hood would listen to no sort of argument. So towards the end of August, without a shot being fired, Toulon was occupied by the British in the name of Louis XVII. The harbour contained fifty-eight warships; more than thirty of them sail of the line. This haul by itself should have ended the war if Lord Hood had only been allowed to remove what he had taken. But the moment he made the suggestion there was an indignant outcry, not only from the Royalists whose wishes could not with fairness be neglected, but also from the Spaniards whose jealous suspicions were aroused.

It was after the capitulation that Lord Hood found a particular service for his hero-worshipper. He knew that he could hardly hope that his occupation of Toulon would long remain unchallenged, and to secure his ground he needed a far stronger force than the insignificant landing-party he had brought from England.

This numbered no more than fifteen hundred men and the fortifications to be guarded extended over fifteen miles. Therefore he summoned Captain Nelson and bade him with all speed fly to Naples and urge the Neapolitan Court to provide 10,000 reinforcements.

At Naples the one person who felt acutely the critical nature of foreign affairs was the Queen. The King, a bourgeois creature at heart, was contented to hunt and shoot or bandy jests with the multitude. But Maria Carolina, a sister of Queen Marie Antoinette, saw the fate that had overturned the throne of France ready to overturn the throne of Naples. Pity for her sister occupied her waking thoughts, and at nights nameless Jacobin horrors crowded her dreams. In her distress she turned for consolation to the wife of the British Ambassador, Lady Hamilton; not only, as Romney's pictures show, the most beautiful Englishwoman of her day, but also the most passionately patriotic. Gifted with a kind heart and ready sympathy she did her best to cheer the drooping Queen; and drew for her in glowing colours a picture of the British fleet, sailing unchallenged round the world, righting wrongs and rescuing the distressed like England's prototype St. George. If only an Admiral Blake should come with a whip-lash trailing from his masthead how quickly would he drive the *sans-culottes* whining and yelping to their kennels!

To say the very least of it Nelson's sudden visit was not only well-timed, but most dramatic. He came as the fulfilment of the Queen's desire and Lady Hamilton's prophecy. He came as the herald of brighter days and the bearer of immediate good tidings: for Toulon had fallen with its crown of ships and there was hope for Marie Antoinette. If anything more was needed to heighten the impression, Nelson supplied it by his ingratiating tact and fiery enthusiasm. "I am going to introduce you," Sir William said to his wife, "to a little captain who is not exactly handsome, but who will live to become a *great* man. I can tell by his conversation." The Court greeted the British sailor effusively. Banquets were held in his honour, and the King set him at his right hand. And what was more to the point 6,000 troops were immediately granted and transports to carry them to Toulon. Nelson thought that something was due from him in return. He spread a table on board the *Agamemnon*, invited the King and Queen, ordered the

best music, and concealed the ungainly parts of the ship under banks of roses and jasmine. The Court was vastly diverted at the idea of so novel a reception. But just as the appointed hour drew near, tidings were brought of a French sail in the neighbourhood; and without another thought for his dinner-party Nelson weighed anchor and like a lightning flash was off in search of her.

The state visit thus unceremoniously concluded, Nelson rejoined the flag. Lord Hood congratulated him upon the success of his mission, and gave a gratifying proof of confidence by dispatching him at once upon another. In this way Nelson was happily debarred from all participation in the finale that rang down the curtain on the occupation of Toulon. The Republican armies mustered in strength until there were 45,000 men without the walls. Within, the number of troops was quite inadequate, though raised to 10,000 by the exertions of Lord Hood. Citizen Bonaparte planted his artillery in positions that commanded the city, and on 17th December the Admiral gave reluctant orders for its immediate evacuation. Captain Sidney Smith was entrusted with the task of destroying the ships, and accounted for twenty-four; but the Spaniards told off to co-operate with him set fire to the floating powder-magazine which should have been loaded and sunk. A shattering explosion shook the town and blew one British gunboat to fragments. The burning of the arsenal lent new horrors to the scene, and the Neapolitans, losing their presence of mind, stampeded like so many mules. Amid such distractions Lord Hood quietly rescued the Toulonese. By utilizing nine of the enemies' ships and cramming his own to suffocation he delivered 15,000. Many, however, fell before the muskets of the Jacobins; many were drowned as, in despair, they waded after the boats. Those who were left behind were condemned *en masse*, and in daily batches mechanically executed.

If the circumstances of the withdrawal had left him time to destroy the French fleet utterly Lord Hood would not have regretted the compulsion that set him afloat again. But the new masters of Toulon had still a fleet equal to his own. And the loss of Minorca in the previous war left England without a base of operations nearer than the Bay of Gibraltar. A close blockade of Toulon from the Straits was out of the question, and Lord Hood resolved on the conquest of Corsica.

The French had three strongholds in the island, San Fiorenzo, Bastia and Calvi. When a reconnaissance in force was made before the first, the garrison retired, without a show of resistance, on the stronger works at Bastia. Hood was hotly in favour of besieging them at once, for Nelson, acting as pioneer, had reported in favour of the attempt. But the soldiers estimated the garrison at 2,000 and the General condemned the scheme as "rash" and "visionary" and refused with his 1,500 men even to think of it. He was a talented officer of ripe experience. He was well versed in siege works and his opinion was worthy of close attention. Yet Hood rejected it without a scruple and accepted Nelson's instead.

As Nelson was younger than many of his captains Lord Hood in proceeding to Bastia took care to leave behind all who were senior to his favourite. For troops the Admiral had to rely on himself and he landed his marines, some thousand strong, and a body of seamen under Nelson. This game little band acted as army and siege train. The ground was difficult; the defences stout. But the arms of the sailors were stouter. They made roads. They levelled platforms. They erected batteries. They removed mountains. Nelson might well be proud of them. Their gunnery practice was magnificent; but then, as they modestly explained, shooting was on land an easy affair after a rolling deck at sea.

And now reliable information reached Nelson that there were not 2,000 in the town after all, but more than 4,500. How many commanders would have found in this honourable occasion for withdrawal! Nelson did not even report it to head-quarters. It was not that he was insensible to peril. But heaven had endowed him in sevenfold degree with a fearlessness of responsibility not given at all to ordinary mortals. In London he had seen a picture that caught and held his fancy. It was "The Death of Wolfe" by Sir Benjamin West, P.R.A. Nelson assured the artist that whenever he saw the picture it set him in love with death.* His mind reverted to the picture now. "What would the immortal Wolfe have done?" he asks in one of his letters. "Beat the enemy if he perished in the attempt!"

* Nelson asked West why more pictures of the kind were not painted. West laughingly said, "For want of sitters," little thinking that the man before him would serve as a model for a companion canvas.

Towards the end of May, 1794, the fortress surrendered. Its 4,500 men piled their arms at the feet of his faithful "Jacks" and 1,000 marines. Nelson laughingly exulted. He had always been of opinion, he said, that one Englishman was a match for three of any other race on earth.

Calvi now alone held out and the Toulon fleet, beginning to bestir itself, demanded Lord Hood's immediate presence elsewhere. Happily additional soldiers had by this time arrived, and the siege was undertaken in form. The new General, however, asked for a naval brigade and this was put under Nelson's command. With him went Captain Benjamin Hallowell, a hero with the stature and strength of a giant and the soured-faced pleasantries of an executioner. The sailors carried out the same arduous duties they had performed so admirably at Bastia. It was cruel work though, tugging and hauling in the pitiless heat of the dog days; and the men fell sick from sunstroke and fatigue. Nelson enjoyed good health. There was not enough of him, he said, to offer resistance to fever. He was like a reed among the oaks, bending while others were broken. But suddenly misfortune befell him. It was seven o'clock in the morning of 12th July. Nelson, according to his custom, was in the most advanced battery. A shot struck the parapet at his feet. The splintered stone was flung with violence upwards: and Nelson felt the blood stream down his face. His eye also was cut; but he took little note of it, rejoicing that the other wounds were only superficial. The surgeons told him that all would be well. He was bandaged and returned to his work. But the injured eye did not recover. Little by little the sight faded, and in a few months it was almost gone. Nelson could distinguish light from darkness, but that was all. "Never mind!" he said in his plucky way, "I can see very well with the other."

Calvi fell in August; and Corsica was won. Its capture set the crown on Lord Hood's career,* and gave his fleet the position they required. The chief honours by the admission of all belonged to Nelson. Lord Hood, who had been unwilling to say much after Bastia for fear of reflecting discredit on the army, now spoke up nobly for him. "His unremitting zeal and exertion I cannot sufficiently express." Yet Nelson received not the smallest reward.

* The King raised him a step in the peerage, from Baron to Viscount Hood.

"Some day I'll have a Gazette of my own," he said; but his heart was sore; and when at the approach of winter Lord Hood went home, he began for a while to lose hope and questioned his power to rise in his profession. It was at this time that he nursed the thought of early retirement and a tranquil country life devoid of care. He dreamed of a little cottage with thatched roof, its white walls canopied with honeysuckle, a garden with high red walls and elms beyond, a cloudless blue sky overhead, and the hum of bees swinging among the hollyhocks.

Lord Hood went home primarily in search of health. It was generally anticipated that he would soon be back and Admiral Hotham, his second in command, took charge of the fleet while he was away. The arrangement was only intended to be temporary, but as ill-luck would have it, Lord Hood was detained, and as a result the temporary arrangement received the sanction of time. Hotham was a gentle, easy-going soul; affable to all and universally popular. He had seen varied experience in the American War and repeatedly distinguished himself. He was punctual to perform, cool in a crisis, never in the way, never out of it, plucky, indispensable; the ideal second in command. But he had never before held command in chief: and whatever others may have thought of his abilities he rated them low enough himself, and felt at times unequal to his task. He would not expose a fleet to the risks that he had accepted gaily in a single ship. He liked to have his whole brood tucked safely under his wings, and was for ever calling them back if they grew venturesome or independent.

If Hood had returned there is little doubt that either by an unrelaxed blockade he would have kept the Toulon fleet closely imprisoned; or by subtle lures he would have drawn them out, savagely fallen on them hip and thigh, and trampled the residue under foot. What did Hotham elect to do? He certainly did not keep watch and ward on Toulon. The French found no sentinels before the door, and they swaggered out to rescue Corsica. When, however, on 10th March they sighted the English fleet, their courage would seem to have suddenly run out of the heels of their boots.

On 13th March they were still streaming in the direction of Toulon with the English ships still in pursuit. There was a fresh breeze and the fugitives looked as if they were certain to get away. But at eight o'clock an accident happened. The *Ça Ira*,

third from the rear of the French, ran on board her next ahead and lost her fore and main topsails. She began to lag at once and drop to leeward. Here then was a chance for the British fleet! But the British fleet were nowhere near. Admiral Hotham's ship, the *Britannia*, and all but one of her companions were miles and miles astern.

All but one! The *Agamemnon*, far in advance of the rest, was placed exactly in that particular spot most advantageous for an immediate attack. How she got there no man shall say. It is enough that she was there and there alone.

The debris from aloft hung over the *Ça Ira's* side. She was in sorry plight and the French Admiral not only sent a frigate to tow her, but detailed two ships of the line to stand by in case she needed them. The *Ça Ira* was a ship of eighty-four guns, large enough to stow the entire *Agamemnon* in her hold; her two protectors were the *Jean Barras* of seventy-four guns and the *Sans-culotte*, a first-rate of one hundred and twenty; rabid hot Jacobins all of them.

They had little enough to make them afraid unless the main body of the British came up. Yet Nelson resolved to attack at once in his absurd little sixty-four.

His first idea was to run right under the stern of the *Ça Ira* before he discharged a gun. But the *Ça Ira** found the range with her stern-chasers and at once made dangerous practice. "Not a shot," said Nelson, "missed some part of the ship, and latterly the masts were struck every time." Arguing that if he were crippled aloft he would be unable to fight at all, and that if he did not fight no one else could, he suddenly resolved to begin from where he was, even if it was a hundred yards short. Jamming his helm hard a-starboard he brailed up his spanker and after-sails and as the canvas shivered and the *Agamemnon* fell away he poured the whole of a double-shotted broadside into the stern of his wretched enemy. The instant all the guns were fired he braced up the after-yards, and put the helm a-port: then at the crucial moment sidled once more to discharge another broadside. This quick alternation of "strike" and "follow up" he practised with

* "Ça Ira" ("'Twill speed") was one of the most popular Revolutionary songs, until Rouget de Lisle with the "Marseillaise" surpassed it. Even Marie Antoinette, it is said, could not refrain from strumming it on her harpsichord.

rhythmical precision from eleven to one o'clock. By so doing he not only brought the entire strength of his own little ship to bear on the weakest part of his tremendous antagonist, but entirely prevented her from making the slightest use of a single gun on either of her broadsides.

The *Ça Ira* was soon a complete wreck. She had been allowed no moment to repair her previous damage, and the *Agamemnon* had brought down her mizen topmast, mizen topsail and cross-jack yard. She could endure the torture no longer and with the help of the frigate hove to and brought her broadside to bear. The *Agamemnon* immediately closed and pounded her bravely at half pistol shot. But now that the fight was a standing one the *Jean Barras* and the *Sans-culotte* by dint of hoisting top-gallant sails rolled clumsily to help their friend. Nelson saw that at last it was time to be gone and bore away to join his Admiral who, with wild signals flying, called aloud for his return.

The *Agamemnon's* sails and rigging were much cut about and there were holes between wind and water; but thanks to perfect handling there were but seven wounded men in the entire ship's company. And now without rest all hands were busy repairing damage above and below.

As for the *Ça Ira* her wounds were not so easily healed: and there was no port in the neighbourhood to offer her refuge. The French might abandon her if their sense of honour were blunted, but if they were resolute to save her, then they could hardly avoid a renewal of the fight, and a renewal under disadvantages. At the beginning Hotham could only oppose the French fifteen with thirteen British sail of the line and a Neapolitan seventy-four.* The balance of numbers was now redressed: Nelson's single-handed encounter had created a position of affairs which might lead to great things on the morrow.

When the morrow dawned the English were ready for battle and the *Ça Ira* was not. She had been taken in tow by the *Censeur*, a ship nearly as large as herself; but her position to leeward still left her dangerously exposed. Admiral Hotham directed an immediate attack to be made upon her; and the French, to meet the menace, turned their whole line about on the opposite tack. They had no intention of accepting battle to the death, but designed, if

* Captain Caracciolo.

such were possible, a rescue of the threatened ships. The leading sail of the English line were too quick, and cut in between victims and would-be rescuers. In doing so they encountered a cross fire under which they suffered severely; but their object was attained, and the French, finding rescue impossible and deeming honour satisfied, luffed out of immediate range. In this second round of the battle Nelson played a prominent part. His *Agamemnon* was well advanced in the English array; and though suffering less severely than the two that led the line, enjoyed the unwonted luxury of fighting both broadsides together.

The *Ça Ira* and *Censeur* made a gallant defence, losing between them 600 men. But fate had decreed their loss, and with dramatic appropriateness they both hauled down their colours to the *Agamemnon*. Admiral Hotham was delighted. It had seemed to him on the previous day that he was little likely to overhaul the foe, still less engage him in battle. And now he had captured two prizes. It was really very gratifying. Good news from the Mediterranean would be sure of its welcome at home, and could not fail to bring its reward.* His kindly face was wreathed in smiles, and as he walked the quarter-deck he rubbed his hands together.

When every allowance has been made for his elation, it must be admitted that Admiral Hotham's engagement is wanting in the elements that compose a first-class battlepiece. Let it be compared with the Battle of The Saints; for it opened in similar fashion. Suppose Rodney had been in Hotham's place. Can anybody doubt that he would have abandoned the *Ça Ira* and *Censeur* and flung himself upon their larger squadron the moment that the Frenchmen went about! Only by so doing could a decisive victory have been won. The French indeed protested that the battle was drawn, for although two vessels were left with the British, they were simply the victims of unavoidable mischance. There is a certain amount of reason in this argument, but the grounds on which it is based are grotesquely unjust. The *Ça Ira* and the *Censeur* were not the victims of mischance, but the indisputable spoils of Nelson's *Agamemnon*.

If then Hotham was satisfied with the reflected glory of the

* On his arrival home Hotham was raised to the peerage; less, it was whispered, for merit than for importunity!

day, what were the feelings of Nelson who had won the battle by himself? They find expression in a memorable letter which he wrote home shortly afterwards: "I wish to be an Admiral and in command of the English fleet. I should very soon either do much or be ruined. My disposition cannot bear tame and slow measures. Sure I am, had I commanded our fleet on the 14th, that either the whole French fleet would have graced my triumph or I should have been in a confounded scrape. I went on board Admiral Hotham as soon as our firing grew slack in the van and the *Ça Ira* and *Censeur* had struck, to propose to him leaving our two crippled ships, the two prizes and four frigates to themselves and to pursue the enemy; but he, much cooler than myself, said, 'We must be contented. We have done very well.' Now, had we taken ten sail and allowed the eleventh to escape . . . I could never have called it well done." *

His remarkable share in this battle should have been sufficient to make Nelson's fortune. And yet it did little to bring his merits into greater prominence. Rumour from Whitehall said that in June there would be an unusual promotion to flag-rank in order to celebrate the first anniversary of Lord Howe's glorious victory. Nelson began to anticipate the event with something like dismay. The interest of the war was focussed in the Mediterranean and a junior Admiral would be certainly dismissed to a dull and distant station. He need have had no fear. There was an unprecedented promotion. Thirty-five captains received their flag. But Nelson was not among the number.

It must not be supposed that Hotham was jealous of his talented subordinate or underrated his abilities. If his public acknowledgments were lukewarm, the private manifestations of his gratitude were unmistakable. Whenever there was anything special to be done, he always selected Nelson. Whenever a squadron was detached for particular service, he invariably put Nelson in command. But what satisfaction there might have been in this was discounted by the fruitlessness of all his campaigning. The Toulon fleet might cruise as it would. He made no attempt to blockade it. Warships came through the Strait from Brest. He made no pretence

* One of the French ships "fell out" during the night of the 12th; another on the night following; two were taken on the 14th. Thus of the original fifteen, eleven were at large when Nelson interviewed the Admiral.

of waylaying them. Reinforcements joined his own standard; to Nelson's delight came his fellow-probationer, Captain Troubridge of the *Culloden*.* And yet Hotham lifted no finger to find the French and deliver a smashing blow.

In November, 1795, he suddenly resigned his command. It may have been that he felt unable any longer to endure the strain. It may have been that he only presided so long in the hope that Lord Hood would come out again and restore the old relations. Whatever the reality he went home on the score of ill-health, though no one had noticed any symptoms of disease.

Admiral Sir John Jervis was appointed to command in his stead.

The figure of Jervis has flitted from time to time through previous pages. The reader must now become more perfectly acquainted with him. He was born in Staffordshire in 1735, the son of a lawyer. When he was twelve years old his father received appointment as Counsel to the Admiralty and removed to Greenwich. Here John moved in nautical circles and was bitten with the idea of becoming a sailor. His father was determined to make a lawyer of him, but even at that age Jervis had a will of his own and, failing to secure parental consent, went off to sea without it. His father cut him off with twenty pounds which may have been better than the proverbial shilling, but was quite inadequate for his needs as naval officer. In consequence during his early career Jervis underwent the most pinching privation. Many a youth of his age would have returned in search of a fatted calf. But Jervis was no prodigal. He resolved to live upon his pay, and the more difficult the task became, the more steadfast grew his resolution. He sold his effects and slept on bare boards. He patched his clothes when they wore out, cleaned his own shoes, and washed his own linen. He found penury an uncomfortable school, but in it he learned two noble qualities, self-reliance and self-control. At an age when most young fellows think more of pleasure than of anything else Jervis practised the rigid self-denial of a medieval ascetic.

* Since *Seahorse* days Troubridge had made for himself quite a name in Indian seas. At the beginning of the Revolutionary War he had been captured by the French and rescued by Lord Howe on the Glorious First of June.

At the time of the Seven Years' War, the first in which Jervis took part, there was a commander whose rugged simplicity of character mirrored all that appealed to him most. It was a happy day on which he made the acquaintance of Saunders. With Saunders he sailed in the "Cargo of Courage"; by Saunders he was chosen to carry home the captive *Foudroyant*. He was not forgotten when Saunders sailed for Quebec and when the city fell the Admiral selected him to carry home dispatches. After this he received command of a sloop and with Rodney was present at the bombardment of Havre. Just as the war ended he was made post into the *Gosport*, being then twenty-six years of age.

During the interval of peace Jervis struck up a warm friendship with Samuel Barrington and from him learned to look upon Keppel as the only possible successor of Hawke. When the American War broke out, Jervis stood high on the list of captains; and when he received command of his old friend, the *Foudroyant*, and found himself included in Keppel's fleet, his lucky star seemed to have risen. But instead there came to him, as to Barrington, Duncan and all Keppel's friends, a period of almost total eclipse. No one fought better at Ushant than Captain Jervis; no one gave Keppel abler assistance at his trial. But after Keppel's resignation the *Foudroyant* remained in the Channel Fleet, doomed to an inactivity that would have been perpetual if Gibraltar had not called for occasional relief. In this dull period Jervis could not draw attention to himself. He did, however, draw attention to his ship. The *Foudroyant* was already well known. There was the romantic story of her capture. There was her pace which enabled her to overtake any other battleship afloat. But after she had had time to make Jervis's acquaintance, young officers were sent on board of her that they might see with their own eyes the perfection of management and discipline that gave her a name throughout the fleet as the model man-of-war.

When North resigned in 1782 and Keppel came to the Admiralty and Howe took possession of the Channel, Jervis's fortune revived. In April a hostile squadron was sighted off Brest and chased by the British. The French showed a clean pair of heels to all but Jervis's ship—which they themselves had built. The *Pégase*, seventy-four, covered the rear of the fugitives; and the *Foudroyant* ran after her on a parallel course to leeward. With only a single foe behind

and plenty of friends at hand the *Pégase* grew bold and, seizing the favourable moment, endeavoured to cross her enemy's bows, intending to rake. The thrust was dexterous. But Jervis with greater agility clewed up his mainsail, took in his studding sails, suddenly sprang his luff and parried the movement. Then without a pause he put his helm hard up, ran under his opponent's stern, fought her for forty-five minutes, shot away her mizen and foretop, and brought her colours down. A duel between frigates was common enough. But it was rare for battleships to engage in single combat, and rarer still to engage with decisive result. To have captured a battleship in single fight without the loss of a man was an achievement hitherto only dreamed of. The engagement too was happily timed. The result of Rodney's victory was not then known, and the Empire seemed to totter on the verge. Everywhere men drained their cups to the *Foudroyant;* and as for her captain he was made a Knight of the Bath, and received His Majesty's gracious permission to add to his ancient coat of arms a bridled Pegasus.

A few years later Sir John received his flag; and, when the Revolutionary War began, was nominated to the West Indian command. Here by the superb management of his fleet he confirmed the golden opinions formed of him, and by the speedy reduction of Martinique, Guadeloupe and St. Lucia demanded instant transference to a more important sphere. His return to England coincided with Hood's, and though the Government would not disturb Hotham in the midst of war, they sent out Jervis to replace him the moment they knew that he was ready to retire.

The Mediterranean Fleet, according to custom, welcomed their new commander with a salute of guns. Before the smoke had rolled away they saw the signal to unmoor broken at the *Victory's* masthead. "No more skulking at San Fiorenzo," wrote Nelson joyfully.

Sir John came to the Mediterranean fully resolved to make of his fleet a fighting machine as efficient as the old *Foudroyant.* Those who knew him best extended their sympathy to the fleet. For the hardships of his early life had given Jervis a will of flint and steel and adamant. And fifty years of naval discipline had taught him the best way to impose his will on others. Severity

was the mark of Sir John. Some would have called it brutal severity, others inhuman severity; but all would have agreed that Sir John would go any lengths to attain his end. A cold, passionless, pitiless tyrant he seemed; a man of blood and iron who cared not a jot for the pain he gave. His figure was small, but his voice was like a growl of thunder; and before the stare of his cold blue eye no man dared call his soul his own.

There have been men like Sir John before, men of unsparing sternness and calculating cruelty. But the most of them have been bullies: bullies by nature, or bullies by the accident of high position. Jervis was not a bully. Without doubt he appeared as one, for he punished not only those who had done what they ought not to have done, but with unmistakable relish those also who had failed to do what Jervis expected of them. No man escaped. If there were floggings for the foremast hand and death for mutineers, lieutenants had all their leave cut off, captains were kept up all the night practising evolutions, recalcitrant flag-officers were bundled home, and scathing reprimands were flung impartially broadcast.

But Sir John was not at heart a bully. His severity was the severity of the "Bench". The judge as he enters the court wears an air of solemn gravity which he maintains till sentence is given. The sentence may rightly consign some sorry wretch to the block; but the session over, the judge puts off his robe and reveals to his intimates a smiling face, a kind heart instinct with charity, and a deep-grained love of a joke. Such a man to the life was Jervis. And the simile may be carried a step farther. The judge knows full well that he borrows majesty from his robe; yet will he at times betray his humanity by a good-humoured jest in court. The tales of "Old Jarvie" are numberless, but one in particular brings his picture alive from its frame.

He loved to have all things done with decency and decorum. With him the hoisting of the colours was not a daily routine, but a ceremonial parade. The marines presented arms, the band played "God save the King," and the Commander-in-Chief appeared gorgeous in full dress uniform. As the flag ascended, every head was uncovered.

It was probably only from inadvertence that the captain of the maintop on one occasion omitted to remove his hat. Before he

had time to realize his error, or meditate on the enormity of his offence, the Commander-in-Chief ordered him aft and administered a dozen lashes!

The news of this went the round of the fleet, and a certain lieutenant with more wit than discretion described the episode in a parody on the Third Chapter of Daniel. "The Commander-in-Chief made an image of blue and gold whose height was about five feet seven inches, and set it up on the quarter-deck. . . . And the captain cried aloud and said, 'To you it is commanded, O officers, parson, seamen and marines that at what time ye hear the sound of the trumpet, flute, horn, clarionet, drum, fife and all kinds of music, ye take off your hats and worship the blue and gold image which the Commander-in-Chief hath set up'." And much more in the same mode.

The skit of course was handed round, and of course fell into "Jarvie's" hands. It was not long before he discovered the author and sent for him. Conversation drifted from one topic to another till dinner was announced. Then, although he was entertaining that night every captain in the fleet, the Commander-in-Chief insisted that the lieutenant should grace his board. When dinner was finished, however, he set him aloft upon a dais, and handing him a paper bade him read it. It was in vain that the penitent author cast imploring glances at his host. In a voice of abject misery he stumbled through the first ten verses, and no one present dared to smile. When he came to the eleventh, "Then was the Commander-in-Chief full of fury and the form of his visage was changed," the company could hold themselves no longer and dissolved in noisy mirth. As for the culprit he read to the end, wishing he had never been born.

Judgment was then given.

"Lieutenant," said "Old Jarvie" with a twinkle in his eye, "you have been found guilty of parodying Holy Writ to bring your Commander-in-Chief into disrespect. The sentence is that you proceed to England at once on three months' leave. Upon your return report to me to take dinner here again."

The truth is that with his judicial frame of mind Jervis had in a supreme degree the gift of judging men. With unerring discernment he read them through as if they were so many books. To those who deserved his esteem, to those whose thoughts were for

England's good and the honour of the service, no one could possibly have been kinder; but woe betide the negligent, and the ease-loving and Sir John's pet abomination "old women—in the guise of young men".

The new commander was quick to discover the three best men in the fleet. The moody Hallowell received a singular mark of favour; the Admiral addressed him as "Ben". The courteous knightly Troubridge was honoured as "The Bayard of the British Fleet". And gentle Collingwood, a late arrival, whose gallant part in the "First of June" had brought him no access of fortune, now found himself appreciated without apparent reason.

Nelson was not at San Fiorenzo when the Admiral arrived. He was, as usual, employed on one of Hotham's commissions. In a week or two he returned, and on 19th January, 1796, went on board the *Victory*. The meeting that followed may well be taken as the turning point in his career. Up till now he had found plenty to appreciate him. But he needed a patron, one who would give unlimited scope to his ability and endorse the value of his services. And at last his patron took him by the hand.

This one interview sufficed. "Jarvie's" favours followed instantly. He offered the *Agamemnon's* captain a seventy-four or a ninety. His opinion rose sensibly higher when the offer was refused. Like his predecessor he selected Nelson for all independent commands, for "his zeal, activity and enterprise cannot," he wrote, "be surpassed". He conferred upon him the rank of Commodore, second class; and after a decent interval gave him leave to hoist the broad pendant. Nelson was very grateful. He whispered to Sir John his fears that promotion ere long might banish him elsewhere. "I cannot bear the thought," he said, "of leaving your command." Jervis comforted him. When the dilatory flag arrived, it should be hoisted in the Mediterranean and nowhere else in the world.

If Jervis had taken up the Mediterranean command the moment that Hood laid it down, the history of the world might have been different.

Hotham chose to regard himself as a stop-gap and a substitute. In reality, whether he admitted it or no, he was England's representative in the chief theatre of the war at the war's most critical period. In 1795, his year of office, the league against France lost

more than one of its principals, and England and Austria found themselves alone. It was more than ever necessary that they should fight shoulder to shoulder: and this was not difficult, although Austria derived her strength from military and Britain from naval power. Austria had possessions in Lombardy, and Lombardy between Alps and Apennines opened to the Mediterranean. Here then was the key to the campaign and Hotham could easily have held it. Had he done so, it would have been impossible for the French ever to have invaded Italy.

His entire failure to co-operate with his friends would have mattered less if he had fought a battle of the good old-fashioned sort, or even if he had sealed up the Toulon fleet. But as he did neither of these things, his term of office can only be described as an unmixed calamity. The French without hindrance from him made their preparations and under his very nose sent round by sea the heavy guns they required in Lombardy. In the spring of 1796 all was ready and General Bonaparte came south to take command. Jervis was then but newly arrived; too late to help the Austrians, too late to stop the French.

Had he but come twelve months before!

It is difficult to think of a fleet which contained both Jervis and Nelson as lacking in prestige. Yet so it was. The British Mediterranean Fleet for the time was no more effective than Mathews' in the days of the Austrian Succession. Its impotence and the dazzling brightness of Bonaparte's successes in Italy persuaded inconstant Spain to throw in her lot with France.

This alliance was for the British the chief event of the year. It put into the field against them a combined force of forty sail. And Jervis had not even the fleet of his predecessor. Hotham by the laxity of his blockade had allowed certain of the French ships to escape, and then made matters worse by cutting off a detachment of his own to go in search of them.

The only way to affect the situation and change the current of the war was to win a mighty battle in the Mediterranean. And Jervis had fifteen ships; fifteen ships against forty. He was ready to do what he could. A few months sufficed to instil into his fleet a new spirit of discipline and energy. But the Government at home were timid. And who can wonder? Such a state of things would have been bad enough in the Channel with friendly shores and

handy dockyards. There was no base in the central Mediterranean. Corsica was worse than useless; for the population had grown unfriendly and the island could be held only with their consent. There was nothing else for it. Word was sent to Jervis to relinquish the Mediterranean, evacuate all strongholds and fall back on Gibraltar.

By this confession of weakness England rendered inevitable the overthrow of her ally. And the collapse of Austria left her to face unaided the crisis of the following year.

In December, 1796, Admiral Jervis anchored his fleet at Gibraltar. There was still one post to be abandoned; Elba, which he had seized as an outpost to spy upon Bonaparte. He therefore instructed Nelson to take a frigate and hasten with all dispatch to rescue the garrison. Nelson set out in the *Minerve;* and on the way met a Spanish frigate *La Sabina.* She resisted bravely and the sound of firing brought men-of-war to her help. Before they arrived Nelson had captured his foe and sent a prize-crew on board her. A chase began. The *Minerve* was no longer speedy as before the battle, and the Spaniards gained. But the situation was saved by Nelson's lieutenant in the prize. He was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, robust and muscular; with ruddy complexion, bushy eyebrows and plenty of chin; a man who could have carried Nelson in his arms; a man with a ringing laugh and an unruffled temper; a man with the sweetest disposition in the world; a man whom Nelson learned to love as son and brother and father in one. Thomas Hardy drew the danger on himself. He hoisted the Union Jack to *La Sabina's* masthead with the Spanish colours trailing underneath. Such insolence could not unpunished go. The dons swooped down upon him; and the *Minerve* slipped away and escaped.

THE BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT,
OR
THE BATTLE OF VALENTINE'S DAY

FEBRUARY 14, 1797

Nothing could illustrate better the importance to England of her Mediterranean Fleet than the situation created by its withdrawal in the winter of 1796. Forty hostile ships were set at liberty.

What was to prevent them from leaving the Mediterranean and joining the fleet at Brest? The Directory were planning an invasion of Britain. At Brest their armies were ready. Their alliance with Dutch and Spaniards provided a grand aggregation of naval power which afforded a rosy prospect of success.

It will be argued that Gibraltar opposed a barrier; that the British could hold the Straits against all comers and padlock the Mediterranean. This unfortunately was not the case in wintertime. Gibraltar might serve the purposes of an ambuscade, but was little use as a shelter.

The storms came down and Admiral Jervis lost five of his fifteen ships!

The friendship of Portugal afforded a haven of rest, and Sir John fell back upon Lisbon. But Lisbon is 300 miles from the Straits, and of no strategic value to a fleet whose business it is to detect and intercept hostile squadrons *en route* for the English Channel.

The Spanish Mediterranean Fleet were summoned to Brest. There was nothing to prevent them from reaching the Atlantic. Once there it was exceedingly unlikely that Jervis would see them at all.

Many commanders, with Jervis's luck, would have been only too glad to avoid them. But Jervis was not as other men. He only asked that he might meet his foes; and it was ordained that he should do so.

These were the threads that drew them to him.

The Government at home sent him five new ships, and directed the little squadron to cruise off Cape St. Vincent, which lying midway between Lisbon and the Rock was convenient, wherever Sir John might be. Meanwhile the Spaniards received stringent orders not on any account to attempt their journey in a single run. For rest, refreshment and refit they were to call without fail at Cadiz.*

Obtaining a south-easterly wind they ran through the Straits without mishap. But as they did so the breeze freshened, and they were carried far into the Atlantic, miles to the westward of Cadiz, and miles to the north of it. This would have been a

* The precaution undoubtedly resulted from a study of the Lagos campaign (1759).

positive advantage if they had been making straight for Brest. As it was, they waited for a favourable wind that should bear them landwards again.

And thus they hovered off Cape St. Vincent, Jervis's rendezvous!

Nelson meanwhile was on his return journey from Elba. At Gibraltar he secured Hardy's release by an exchange of prisoners; and learning all that had happened in his absence darted off in his frigate to join Sir John.

Topsails had just been sheeted home when two battleships appeared in pursuit. Excitement was general: and in the midst of it rose a cry "Man overboard!" Hardy quick as thought manned the jollyboat and went in search. But now the *Minerve* was well under way and the strong eastward current that sets through the Straits carried the rescue party away from their friends right into the arms of the foe. It seemed morally certain that Hardy was doomed to a second imprisonment. Nelson, however, was not the man to forget a kindness. "By God! I'll not lose Hardy," he cried. "Back that mizen topsail." The dons watched this manœuvre with amazement. Could it be that a frigate was turning to bay? Impossible. This was beyond doubt a ruse. There were other ships within hail. Caution was necessary; a little less headlong zeal. They shortened sail and dropped astern!

On the night next following this miraculous escape (to be precise, on 12th February), Nelson had a still stranger adventure. He ran by accident into the very middle of the Spanish fleet. How he escaped is a mystery. There was a haze upon the water. But he must have been seen. Perhaps the Spaniards took him for one of themselves. He scurried away with his news and next day joined the Admiral. Jervis had picked up the reinforcements off the Cape and now had fifteen ships. As battle might be but a matter of hours, he bade Nelson be quick and shift his pendant to the *Captain*, seventy-four.

Jervis did not attempt to turn in that night. He made his will, and thought on the morrow. Ever an early riser he was on deck before daybreak and paced restlessly up and down. He was lost in thought, and passers-by heard him speaking to himself. "A victory is very essential," he muttered, "to England at this moment." If anything he understated the truth. A victory at

sea could alone relieve Britain from the nightmare of panic that overshadowed her. The menace of hostile fleets at sea, and the ominous figure of the Corsican had plunged her into the depths of abject misery. For the first time since its foundation the Bank of England was on the verge of bankruptcy. The nation had lost faith in itself. And here was Jervis reasoning like a statesman in the unheroic hours of early morning. A victory? How was it to be procured? If the Spaniards outnumbered him, should he engage them? Supposing they had twenty ships? Supposing they had more than twenty? When had a decisive naval victory been gained with inferior numbers? Sir John's head shrank between his shoulders, and as the dawn rose out of the sea his eyes glistened like steel. England had lost faith in herself and faith in her ships as well, but rooted as firm as a Wealden oak was the faith of her Admiral.

As the hours went by he was joined on the quarter-deck by Captain Hallowell who had lost his own ship in the storm and was serving in the *Victory* as volunteer. The two friends walked and chatted together. The morning had opened with thick fog, but in spite of it reports came in of Spanish ships looming through the haze. From time to time Robert Calder, Sir John's chief of staff, approached with the latest news. "There are eight sail of the line, Sir John." "Very well, sir." "There are twenty sail of the line, Sir John." "Very well, sir." "There are twenty-five sail of the line." "Very well, sir." "There are twenty-seven, Sir John." "No more of that," said the little man, out of patience. "The die is cast. If there were fifty sail I would go through them." This speech delighted Hallowell. With a familiarity which no one else would have dared to use, "Ben" patted his Admiral on the back and cried, "That's right, Sir John. That's right. And by God we'll give them a damned good licking!"

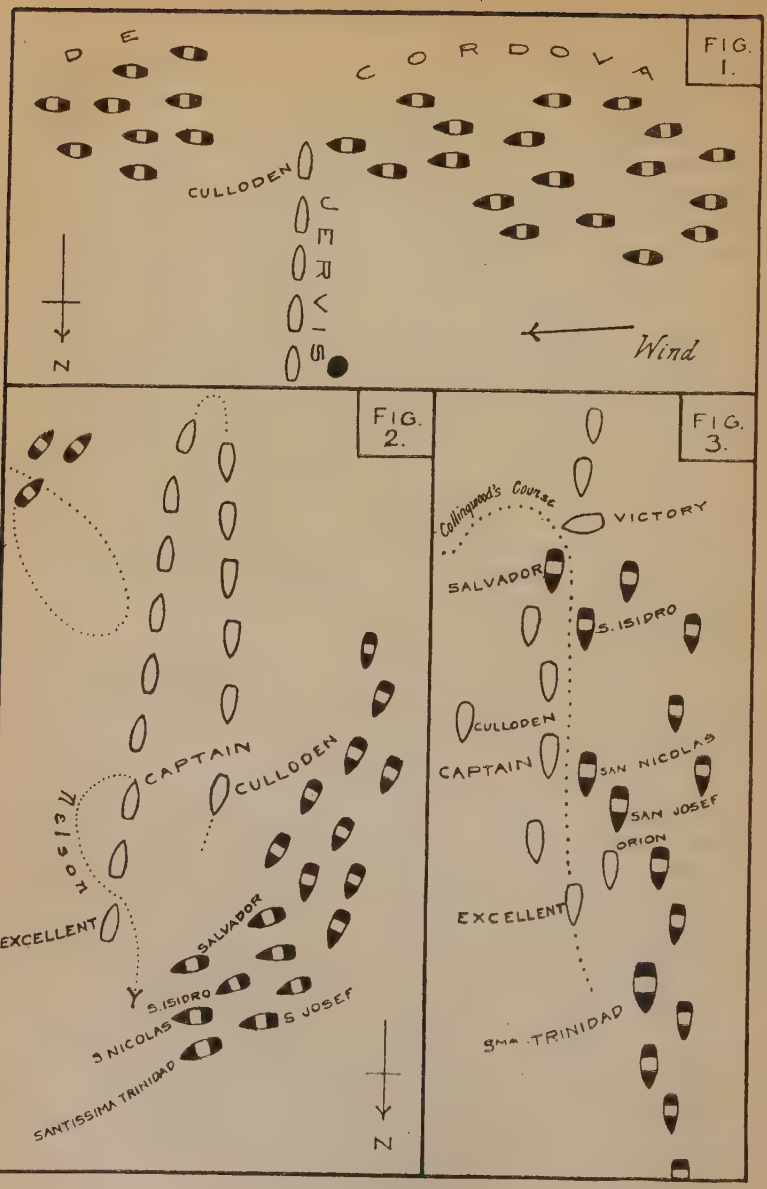
By ten o'clock the sun had scattered the morning mists and it was possible to survey the field of battle and the disposition of the forces. The English were in magnificent order. They were advancing southward on the starboard tack with Cape St. Vincent under their lee some twenty-four miles away. Troubridge in the *Culloden* led the line, and the *Victory*, blue at the main, was seventh astern.

The Spaniards during the night had found the westerly breeze

they required and were steering east to Cadiz. They presented a truly formidable appearance. The flag of Don José de Cordova was carried in proud Castilian fashion by the tremendous *Santissima Trinidad*, the only four-decker ever launched. Around her were gathered six vessels of one hundred and twelve guns, and twenty others, the smallest a seventy-four: in all a fleet of twenty-seven, outnumbering Jervis's by nearly two to one. But the Spaniards were unprepared for the English approach, which until the last moment was concealed by the fog. Their own array was frankly processional; far removed on the one hand from mob-like confusion, on the other still farther from strict line ahead. Had this irregularity been their only fault, they might still have found time to amend it, but as will often happen with an unrehearsed procession, the head and tail had drifted apart and were separated by a dangerous interval.

Jervis leapt at it. He signalled his fleet to crowd on sail and pass through the gap in line ahead; for by the menace alone he would add to their confusion and so deny his enemies any occasion to reform; while if he actually succeeded in cutting their line he would be enabled to throw the whole of his strength on either division of the force he severed. [MAP. FIG. 1.]

About half-past eleven the battle began. The *Culloden* approaching the fateful gap was heading off the leader of the windwardmost group. Both ships made the best of their pace and it looked as if a collision could hardly be avoided. As the Spaniard was a three-decker and the English ship but a seventy-four, the *Culloden's* first lieutenant approached his captain to learn his pleasure. "Let the weakest fend off," said Troubridge stolidly. He waited until the ships were near enough for his gunners to see the whites of the Spaniards' eyes and then he poured into his antagonist two withering broadsides. They were double-shotted and delivered with a precision of aim and a unanimity of detonation that would have done credit to a Port-Admiral's inspection. Literally they admitted of no reply. The bulky Spaniard certainly stopped to offer none. Without discharging a single piece she luffed with alacrity, and yielded the point of contention. Thus the Britons had broken their enemy's line, and the whole of the Spanish windward squadron followed the ship that Troubridge repulsed on a new course trending to the north and parallel to that of Jervis.



THE BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT
February 14, 1797

Had the opposing fleets been in numbers relatively equal, this preliminary skirmish must have led to the utter ruin of the Spaniards. But Jervis's position was still very far from being comfortable. Had the greater Spanish squadron lain to leeward, he might have crushed the smaller before it could interfere. But he was bound to attack the force that had the wind of him and this consisted of seventeen ships compared with his own fifteen. His chief reliance he wisely put in the regularity and discipline of his own efficient little force. There was not a ship but could use both broadsides nor one unwilling to use them.

The need was not long in declaring itself. The Spanish leeward squadron, nine battleships strong, with commendable promptitude tried to carve a way to their friends through the midst of their enemies. The task was admittedly difficult for the wind was in their teeth. But they made it no easier by selecting that particular point where the *Victory* breasted the waves. Jervis's port broadside was waiting for them, though his starboard guns were busily engaged. He even backed a topsail to make his aim secure and poured such a hideous fire into the first of them that she fell away and exposing her stern was raked with direful effect.

But Jervis's main business was with the windward squadron, who were sailing north on the larboard tack while he sailed south on the starboard. This movement if prolonged could only result in an exchange of cannonades.* He could remedy this by reversing his line, tacking all of his ships together, and this without doubt is what he would have done if there had been to leeward no Spaniards at all, or if the Spaniards to leeward had been less active. But their attempted diversions obliged him to prolong his advance to the southward lest they weathered that end of his line. With two things to do at the self-same time, his only way was to tack his ships in succession one after the other. By this means his line would continue to interpose a wall between the two Spanish squadrons, and his van would be able to re-open fire on the engaged force to windward just about the time that the ships of his rear began to lose touch with them.

Upon Troubridge as leader of the English van devolved the duty of initiating the new manœuvre; but as Jervis gave the order for the signal to be hoisted an astonishing sight met his gaze. So

* Cp. Ushant.

confidently had the *Culloden* expected the message that before Jervis's command had fully declared itself she broke the answering signal at her masthead and shivered her sails to go about. Sir John was delighted. "Look at Troubridge," he cried. "He handles his ship as if the eyes of all England were upon him! And would to God they were!"

Gamely emulating their gallant commander in the *Santissima Trinidad*, the Spaniards in the wind fought well. Their guns were not manned as the British were, but for an hour or so the battle raged and the thunder of the gun-peals rattled with hollow rolling.

Then with arresting suddenness the unlooked-for crisis came!

It was about one o'clock and the leaders of the Spanish windward column were at length beginning to draw away past the ships that brought up the English rear; past Nelson's *Captain*, last but two from the end, and Collingwood's *Excellent*, last of all. As yet the renewed attack of Sir John's inverted van had not had time to make its pressure felt, and for the moment Don José was free to act. He put up his helm and wore his ship to resume again the easterly course which Jervis's skill up to now had frustrated. His exact intention is not quite evident. He may have meant to reconstitute his line in orderly array, or he may have hoped to link his ships with the other squadron to leeward. It is more likely that he had had punishment enough and only desired to fly before the wind to the shelter of Cadiz Bay. If he worked his will, the battle from the English point of view must be prematurely concluded or resumed under conditions far less favourable to themselves. [MAP. FIG. 2.]

All this Nelson saw in a flash. With prompt decision he at once resolved to pick up Don José's challenge and fling him back into his place. But how was he to accomplish his design? He was in command of but a single ship and the laws of the service forbade him on any occasion or excuse to leave his place. He was in command of but a single ship and Don José had behind him a division. Yet he hesitated not. There descended upon him the very spirit of Blake, the self-forgetting spirit that in Britain's cause accepts all risks and hazards. Putting his helm to starboard he wore the *Captain* out of the line and glancing between the ship in his wake and the *Excellent* astern of her he threw himself in front of the Spaniards, in front of the mighty *Santissima*

Trinidad of one hundred and thirty guns, the *San Josef* of one hundred and twelve, the *Salvador del Mundo* of one hundred and twelve, the *San Nicolas* of eighty, the *San Isidro* of seventy-four, and other two with names unknown, a first-rate and a third. Seven ships to the *Captain*, the *Captain* a seventy-four.

Alone she faced them, confident, undaunted; but such a contest could not last. Happily for Nelson and the country he served, his sacrifice was not completed. For fifteen minutes or more he held his own, and then from the head of the inverted van came Troubridge, plunging into the fray to save his friend. Side by side the *Captain* and *Culloden* fought for an hour like the wonderful heroes of a bygone mythical age. The very fact that they were not captured speaks more than eloquence for their deeds. Captured! They all but took the *Trinidad;* and as for her attendant three-deckers, gored as by the horns of a stag they lay like hounds exhausted. Their guns lolled idly out of their ports and the red blood ran from their scuppers.

Meanwhile the devotion of the *Captain* and the *Culloden* did not escape the notice of Sir John: but while he thanked heaven for sending him such gallant creatures, he feared they might well be overpowered before the *Victory* herself could reach them. He therefore signalled the *Excellent*, more advantageously placed, to leave her station without delay and go about to attempt their rescue. Collingwood's noble heart beat quickly as he turned at once to obey.

The situation that faced him was as follows. The windward squadron of Cordova's force, abandoning their attempt to cross the British line, had hauled their wind on the larboard tack and were once more running northward. They had picked up two of the seven whom Nelson's daring had stayed in mid-career; but the other five had fallen in a string somewhat astern and a little to leeward; the *Santissima Trinidad* farthest north, the *San Josef* in her wake, then the *San Nicolas*, *San Isidro*, and *Salvador del Mundo*. [MAP. FIG. 3.]

If there was one side of his profession that made a special appeal to Collingwood it was gunnery. Spending his spare time on the gun-decks, coaching the crews himself, he had exacted from his company a rate of gun-fire unsurpassed by any ship afloat. The Spaniards thought themselves fortunate if they took no more

than five minutes for a broadside. Collingwood delivered three in a minute and a half.*

The *Salvador* surrendered before she had time to fire a gun. Before she had time to recover her surprise the *San Isidro* had hauled down her flag. The *Salvador*, seeing the danger gone, hoisted her colours anew. But Collingwood stayed not to secure his conquests. Troubridge's *Culloden* was by this time out of action: and though Nelson was still engaged, his peril was extreme. So Collingwood urged his good ship on to help the man he loved. Hauling up his mainsail just astern of the *Captain* he flung himself between her and the great *San Nicolas* whom she was fighting with her larboard batteries. So close did he go to the Spaniard "that you couldn't have put a bodkin between". And then his terrific broadsides burst out for the third time. Before them the *San Nicolas* reeled: and falling away in the face of the wind fell foul of the *San Josef*.

Collingwood pushed on. There was the *Santissima Trinidad* ahead and swift in pursuit he followed her. Hard on his heels came the *Orion*, another gallant British seventy-four, commanded by one whose fortune it seemed to be present in every fight. With laurels gathered at the Dogger Bank, with "*Kempy*," with Hood, and at The Saints Captain Saumarez, now Sir James, had but recently joined the fleet. As of old he sought the warmest corner, and added at once to its warmth.

Not far behind came Sir John himself in his mighty *Victory*. His position in the centre of his line had enabled him throughout the battle to direct and supervise; and never perhaps was there fight in which continuous control was more needful. Sir John, dissatisfied with the quarter-deck, must needs get a better view. Mounting the steps he stood on the poop. The position was exposed and his danger was quickly evidenced by the death of a marine at his side. Sir John was drenched with the man's blood from hat to knees, and presented a sorry figure. His captain ran up horrified, but Sir John was placidity itself. "I am not at all hurt," he said, wiping the blood from his mouth: and then in his coaxing voice, "Do, 'George,' try if you can get me an orange". From his perch aloft he may have seen the mean trick of the *Salvador*. He resolved on instant punishment, and bearing up he ran

* The Gunnery School at Portsmouth is H.M.S. *Excellent*.

under her stern and raked her fore and aft. The *Salvador* yielded a second time and "Jarvie" shackled her securely.

As the rest of the line plunged past him, banging away at the Spaniards now in full retreat, Nelson may have felt a pang of regret for his own temerity. The *Captain* was a wreck, little more. Of spars, it is true, she had lost her foretopmast only, but there was not a rope that was not cut to shreds or a sail that had not been riddled. The shrouds were like shrunken spider's web, and the wheel was shot away.

His ship was past fighting and past pursuit. Yet Nelson, as ever, found work to his hand. The *San Nicolas* lay on his weather bow and he resolved to enforce her surrender. He put his helm over to starboard and called for boarders.* The spritsail yard of the *Captain* swept over the poop of the *San Nicolas* and hooked in her mizen shrouds. Up came Captain Miller, sword in hand, at the head of the boarding-party, but Nelson gently pushed him back. "No, Miller," he said, "I must have that honour." Then "in his own active little person (for he could almost go through an Alderman's thumb-ring †)" he broke the stern windows of the *Nicolas* and climbed into her after-cabin. The Spaniards saw him coming and slammed the door to imprison him. This was not altogether an unmixed catastrophe, for it gave the Britons time to rally. The Spaniards fired among them, but Nelson splintered the door to fragments and hurried out on deck. Meanwhile a most timely turning movement had been achieved by his trusted lieutenant, Edward Berry. With a second band of boarders he had clambered into the *Captain's* beak-head and with nimble agility swarmed along the spritsail yard and climbed into the Spaniard's mizen-chains. From there in a bound he was on the poop and while Nelson scattered the dons below he hauled down their colours above.

Nelson was now faced by a new predicament. He had won the *San Nicolas*, but the *San Nicolas* was still supported by the arms of the *San Josef*, and the *San Josef* was a three-decker carrying an Admiral's flag. She rang out a challenge of musketry and

* The helm was fixed in the gun-room or after part of the gun-deck. Its use was requisitioned when, as in the present case, an accident happened to the wheel.

† Collingwood.

her towering height commanded the prize. Nelson stayed not to think of that. He sent to Captain Miller for reinforcements, set sentries to guard the ladders of the *Nicolas*, and flung himself on the bulwarks of the *San Josef*, Berry beside him with a helping hand. Armed with the sword * that he had inherited from his uncle Maurice Suckling, he was quickly over the side: and tradition says dashed upon his enemies crying "Victory or Westminster Abbey!"

But the Spaniards would fight no more. They already had felt the force of the British artillery, and their Admiral was dying down below. Unmolested the *San Josef* might have escaped, but her powers of active resistance were ended, and the appearance of the fiery flying commodore was too much for her nerves. An officer informed Nelson that they surrendered. The news seemed too good to be true. Nelson suspected a trick. It was not enough that the captain went down on bended knee and holding his sword by the blade offered it for his acceptance. Nelson must have the submission of every officer on board. All were hastily summoned and each gallant officer in turn tendered his weapon and his honour. Nelson could not possibly hold all the swords. He therefore handed them to one of his bargemen who stood at his side, and the bargeman with scantest ceremony tucked the lot of them under his arm "as if he were making up a faggot". Nelson, looking round to see who was with him, noted with pleasure that most were "old Agamemnons". One of these astounded the hidalgos by stepping up to the peerless hero and grasping him warmly by the hand.

As the British line came past and saw the little *Captain* with her two great prizes beside her, laughter first blended with surprise and then melted into genuine applause. Each ship in turn gave three ringing cheers for the man who had borrowed one hostile ship as a means to capture another. So unique an exploit demanded a significant title and the seamen dubbed it "Nelson's Patent Bridge for Boarding First-Rates".

The tireless Commodore now claimed privilege for his pendant and carried it on board the *Irresistible*, meaning to follow up the flying Spaniards. But it was long past four o'clock and the short February day was nearly over. Sir John decided that

* It is at present in the United Services' Museum, Whitehall.

nothing more could be expected and recalled his myrmidons. Certainly enough had been done. There were four prizes; the *Salvador*, the *San Isidro*, the *San Nicolas* and the *San Josef*. And ten vessels at least were reduced to a state as hopeless as that of the prizes. The *Santissima Trinidad* is said to have lost 200 men and for a time was seen to haul down her flag. She was not taken. There were not enough Britons on the battlefield. But this it is that gives the victory its peculiar flavour. Never before had a battle fleet been torn in pieces, flung broadcast, and trampled on by a pigmy squadron just half its own size. The shame of her defeat was more than Spain could bear. Losing her sense of dignity, she dismissed Don José for ever from her service, and subjected her Admirals to public reprimands or instant degradation.

There was reason enough then why Sir John should be satisfied with his day's work. At five o'clock he ended the fray and sent a message to the *Irresistible*. What was in Nelson's mind as he had himself rowed across? Did he call to remembrance the grim austerity and cruel harshness of Jervis,—of Jervis who preferred obedience to strategy and subordination to the fattest prize? Under Jervis's nose he had dared to leave his station. Would Jervis break him as ruthlessly as he had broken the fleet of Spain?

All hands were mustered in the *Victory* and the Commander-in-Chief had shifted his things. Once more he was stately and dignified, "an image of blue and gold". But when Nelson came towards him, for once in his life the great little man unbent. He flung his arms round his Commodore and embraced him with a hug; telling him in the warmest and kindest words that he knew not how to thank him.*

This was enough for Nelson; would have been, if there were nothing to follow. But, to say truth, if ever sea-victory was appreciated it was Jervis's "Valentine". The messengers who carried home the news were rapturously received: from the coast they were forwarded to London in coaches garlanded with laurel and labelled with chalk "A glorious victory!" Sir John was

* Captain Calder is said to have drawn Sir John's attention to Nelson's wearing from the line, and to have inquired if it did not constitute a breach of discipline. "Ay!" said Jarvie somewhat snappily, "and if ever you offend in the same way I promise you my pardon beforehand."

created an Earl and received a pension of £3,000 a year. It was no more than his due, for his well-judged rashness had saved the State. At the suggestion of the King himself he took the title of Lord St. Vincent. Captain Calder, who brought home dispatches, was knighted; and gold medals were granted to all commanders of ships.

But Nelson was the hero of the hour. Whitehall had already decided to make him an Admiral and the arrival of his flag just after the fight was appropriate and opportune. His real reward was a Knighthood of the Bath. He could have been made a baronet had he so willed: but he was disinclined to hand down to posterity a title which he could not endow with income sufficient for its dignified support. More gratifying than all was the wave of popularity which lifted him up at last. What it was that he had really done men scarcely understood. It was not for all to appreciate the intuition of the genius who could mould the very crisis of affairs into an instrument to enforce success. The ignorant made their own idol and worshipped it. They saw in Nelson one who had dashed into the very thick of things, carved his way through thronging foes, captured the first ship to stand in his path and used her as a Hercules' club to crush the biggest vessel afloat. Until the battle of St. Valentine's Day he had been to all intents unknown. From this time forth his every deed was chronicled.

TENERIFFE

JULY 24, 1797

There is but one Nelson.—LORD ST. VINCENT.

Lord St. Vincent's labours did not end with his victory; for there were still in Cadiz twenty-three ships and these he hoped in time to lure from their anchorage and oppose again under battle conditions more favourable for complete success. With this end he appealed for reinforcements. Government were willing enough. But now the State was shaken to its foundations by the great Mutiny of the fleet. This but for his timely Valentine must have been attended by graver and more disastrous mischances. Even after Lord Howe's pacification, and the execution of Parker the Delegate, there remained several vessels in which the embers of

mutiny still glowed. By a happy expedient Government sent them to the Cadiz blockade. By this means they rid their own shoulders of a burden of intolerable anxiety; they reinforced their deserving Admiral; and they sent unruly turbulent ships to the one man afloat who could tame them.

Mutiny was practically impossible under St. Vincent's flag. On board the *St. George*, when she joined him, there were two cases. A court martial was opened by the Captain and concluded its sittings on a Saturday night. The men were found guilty, but claimed an interval of time in which to prepare for death. Five days were granted. St. Vincent rescinded the indulgence and had the culprits hanging from the yard-arm first thing on the following morning.

The *Marlborough* was a very bad ship. She brought an unsavoury reputation with her and, as she approached, St. Vincent signalled her to assume a kind of quarantine position so that the plague might be stayed at once. There was a case of mutiny on board. A court martial was assembled and the prisoner convicted. He was sentenced to be hanged, not as was usual by a quota of men from other ships, but by the *Marlborough's* men alone. The Captain of the *Marlborough* hastily visited the Commander-in-Chief. St. Vincent received him with pomp and circumstance. The entire ship's company was convoked and stood at attention. The Earl, removing his hat, remained throughout the interview uncovered. There was breathless silence. Captain Ellison explained that the trouble in his ship had been caused by a debate as to the proper punishment for mutiny. His company were unanimously of opinon that the death-sentence was without warrant or justification. He did not desire to see the verdict revised: but he begged to warn his Chief that any attempt to make the *Marlborough's* men unwilling executioners must be followed by consequences which he could only contemplate with horror. "Do you mean to tell me," said St. Vincent freezingly, "that you cannot command your own ship? For if that is so, I will at once send on board somebody else who CAN!"

So the captain returned crestfallen.

Eight o'clock next morning was fixed as the hour for execution. But St. Vincent's preparations were long before that in readiness. He had caused the *Marlborough's* port-lids to be lowered, and

from every ship in the fleet he had requisitioned a launch specially manned and equipped, with a smashing carronade in her bows, twelve rounds apiece to every gun and a trusty lieutenant and gun-crew. This fleet of scorpions he put under the command of Captain Campbell with instructions, if need arose, to approach within a handbreadth of the *Marlborough* and blow her out of the water. All hands were piped to witness punishment and, as the hour of eight approached, a boat was seen to leave the flag-ship's side with the prisoner and provost-marshal. They came alongside of the *Marlborough* and mounted her side. Captain Campbell aligned his boats athwart her bows. Tompions were removed and all made ready. Then came the sound of a booming gun and an ominous yellow flag broke at the masthead. The *Marlborough's* men conducted their messmate to the cathead and fixed the halter round his neck. A moment later the victim was lifted off his feet: lifted—then lowered again! Was it open revolt? Every heart beat more quickly. The little fleet of scorpions wriggled nearer to open fire. But the tension lasted for a minute only. The rope of death had been badly rove. The "Marlboroughs" adjusted it and hauled their victim to the yard-arm with a run.

"Discipline is preserved, sir!" said St. Vincent, replacing his hat.

There were other executions: but never again was the issue in doubt. St. Vincent stood revealed as the majesty of omnipotent law. What the seamen thought of him may be evidenced from the reception of the *London*, arch-mutineer of Spithead. Her captain went to the flagship to report himself, and his barge lay swinging alongside. Heads protruded from the port-holes for a little friendly talk, and one of the "Londons" in the barge called out: "I say, what have you fellows been doing while we've been fighting for your beef and pork?" "If you'll take my advice," said a voice in reply, "you'll say nothing at all about that down here, for by —— if old Jarvie hears ye, he'll have you dingle-dangle from the yard-arm at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

Nelson's *Captain* had been so maimed on St. Valentine's Day that he was forced to part with her. In her place he received the *Theseus*, as wild and lawless a termagant as any sent out from home. But the treatment, which in earlier days had induced the "Albemarles" to volunteer *en bloc* to follow their master where-

wherever he went, quickly converted the men of the *Theseus* from blustering bullies to ideal sailormen, brave as lions, affectionate and tractable as children, faithful as dogs and generous as only sailormen can be. Within three weeks from the time that Nelson hoisted his flag the following paper was discovered pinned to the quarter-deck. "Success attend Admiral Nelson! God bless Captain Miller! We thank them for the officers they have placed over us. We are happy and comfortable, and will shed every drop of blood in our veins to support them. And the name of the *Theseus* shall be immortalized as high as the *Captain's*. (Signed) SHIP'S COMPANY."

Meanwhile the blockade of Cadiz continued, and Nelson was placed in command of the inshore squadron. The Spaniards were loath to come out, and at the beginning of July St. Vincent sent mortar-boats to bombard the town and goad its defenders into making some show of resistance. On one occasion the *Thunder* bomb suffered gravely in the firing line and had to be suddenly withdrawn. The Spaniards with a force of gun-boats and launches dashed out to cut off her retreat. Nelson gathered a handful of similar craft and hurried to rescue her. A hot encounter took place and the Admiral's barge found herself opposed by a great Spanish launch manned by thirty big strapping fellows. Nelson had with him all told but twelve besides himself. The fight was desperate. There was no occasion for show of skill. It was a scuffle of thrusting swords and slashing cutlasses: a hand-to-hand encounter. The Britons laboured under an almost impossible handicap, and Nelson with all his talent for battle was hardly built for such an affray. Yet his fiery spirit bore him up and John Sykes served as his shield. Twice the faithful coxswain adroitly parried what must else have proved mortal blows; and when a third came and he could not raise his weapon in time, he thrust himself before his master and received the stroke upon his head. For such spirited gallantry he received the reward reserved for the hero of a fairy tale. Carried back to the ship he easily recovered from a wound that would have killed anyone else; and recovering learned to his joy that the little Admiral had slain eighteen of the Spanish thirty, captured all the rest, and returned in triumph with the captured launch and a couple of bomb-boats as well.

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There was always one cheering possibility for a jaded fleet blockading Cadiz, the possibility of snapping up the home-returning ships with treasure from Spanish America. To St. Vincent there came a rumour that the Viceroy of Mexico was on his way eastward with a garnered harvest of six or seven million pounds. The most careful watch was kept: and when the Viceroy came not, Nelson suggested that he had gone to the Canary Islands and proposed to his Chief an expedition to Teneriffe where in days gone by Blake had wrought his great destruction. The idea did not commend itself to St. Vincent so long as the news continued vague, but after a while he heard that a rich galleon from the Philippines had taken refuge in the harbour of Santa Cruz: and he revived Nelson's scheme and sent its author forth to do his worst.

Nelson was never one to raise difficulties, and when St. Vincent put under his charge three men-of-war, three frigates, one fifty and a cutter, he accepted his mission gladly. But it is only fair to his memory to record that the force did not agree with his estimate of what the business required. He had taken Bastia. He had taken Calvi. But in each place he had acted as Brigadier with a landing-party sufficient for his purposes. No soldiers accompanied him now, and Nelson judged them essential. It is true that Blake achieved his purpose with a squadron of ships alone; but then his purpose was different. He had a harbour of ships with which to deal. Nelson, too, would have known how to deal with them. But now there was but the island itself with its castle and forts, its garrison and citadel. "The whale was sent to do the elephant's work."

When Teneriffe was reached on 20th July, Nelson's preconceptions were confirmed. The key to the situation was a fort that overlooked Santa Cruz and commanded it.

Nelson set ashore what force he could muster. But unsupported by artillery the bravest were helpless, and the treacherous winds and adverse currents prevented the approach of the ships. Before a second attempt could be made the Spaniards had rallied in defence; and, failing the arrival of a British army to invest the island in form, at this point the attack on Teneriffe might with profit have been abandoned.

Nelson could not and would not face the prospect of returning

with purpose unfulfilled, of confessing that at last he was baffled. He therefore resolved on a surprise attack to be delivered at midnight on the 24th under a veil of thickest darkness. Himself he attended with scrupulous care to the most minute and trifling details. Nothing was overlooked: nothing forgotten. Yet the enterprise was hazardous in the extreme; the chances of success no rosier than those that a forlorn hope commonly presents. Nelson set his affairs in order and prepared for death. "I did not expect," he afterwards confessed, "ever to return alive."

It was eleven o'clock when the expedition set forth. The night was exceedingly dark and the weather wild and blustering. In all there were about 1,000 men; 700 of them in boats, some in a provision vessel captured locally and nearly 200 in the cutter *Fox*. Oars were muffled: and the boats were roped together to prevent a premature dispersal. Guns were carried and sledges to drag them; axes and ropes and scaling-ladders. Silently the assailants groped their way through the pitchy night, listening to the roar of distant breakers and the snore of the grinding beach dragged down by the underwash.

All went well until they were within half a cannon's shot from the mole. It was then about half-past one, and not quite so dark as it had been. Nelson gave the word to cast off the ropes, to run in quickly, give three huzzas and leap ashore. But at this point fortune forsook them. The alarm was raised and a murderous fire opened. The mole itself was held by some 400 or 500 men with 24-pounder guns. Their shot crashed through the boats: and the boats were uncertain of their whereabouts and at the mercy of the angry surf. Captain Bowen's went down like a plummet and with the boat her crew. Bowen struck out and reached the shore, shook himself, and was shot where he stood. Even under such dismaying conditions the courage of the Britons never faltered. They pressed on. They boarded the mole. They routed its defenders. They captured its guns. But the tocsin sounded. The seamen's huzzas were answered by peals from the belfries. Santa Cruz was awake and alive to its peril. The batteries of the citadel commanded the length of the mole. They swept it from end to end with grape and musketry and mowed down Nelson's men in swaths.

Nelson's boat reached the mole in safety. Stepping ashore the Admiral drew his sword, the talisman which he had held when he took the *San Josef*. Even as he drew it he was struck in the right elbow by a grape-shot that splintered his arm most horribly. He had just time to shift his precious weapon into his other hand and grasp it tightly. Then he collapsed. As he fell he was caught in the arms of his step-son, Josiah Nisbet, whom only a few hours before he had been vainly persuading to stay behind. The youngster was only seventeen: yet his coolness in this dire emergency would have done credit to a modern surgeon in a London hospital. He laid Nelson gently in the bottom of the boat and with his hat concealed the wound that bled distressfully. Then as the bullets whistled round him he took from his neck a silk handkerchief and, twisting a tourniquet, bound the arm tightly; while a kindly seaman stripped off his shirt and tore it to pieces for a sling. The boat was beached; but Nisbet with the help of five or six men pushed her off, and they proceeded close under the guns of the forts so as to be safe from further accident.

As they gave way towards the ships, the guns of the Spaniards found the *Fox* and sent the gallant cutter to the bottom. The air was rent with agonized shrieks that pierced through Nelson's trance. He tried to move and recovering from his swoon craved assistance and sat up trying to make out what had happened. They told him and bent to the oar. But he bade them stand by to rescue the drowning and, forgetful of his own pain, he helped the poor fellows to scramble into his boat with his one remaining arm.

The first ship they reached was the *Seahorse*, but Nelson refused to let them stop. They reminded him that his life must depend on immediate attention to his arm. But he would not listen. Captain Fremantle's wife was on board the *Seahorse* and for the sake of his life he would not frighten her.

When they came alongside of the *Theseus* all were anxious to help him. He declined assistance. "Let me alone," he said. "I have yet my legs left and one arm." So they flung him a rope and twisting it round his hand he hauled himself up the side. A strange picture this: for Nelson was no brawny vigorous warrior callous alike to bloodshed and distress. He was small and weak; and the sufferings of others brought tears of compassion to his eyes.

On deck he called to the surgeon to make ready his instruments, for he knew that his right arm must be removed. Then he busied himself with a relief party which he sent to rescue victims from the *Fox ;* and this done descended to the cockpit and the terrors of the amputation table. He faced them with stoic heroism and afterwards declared that his acutest pang was caused by the first caress of the cold deliberate steel. Henceforth on board all ships of his the surgeons were given portable stoves that they might remove at least one torture of the many their surgery inflicted.

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Meantime strange scenes were being enacted elsewhere. Some of the boats had in the darkness failed to find the head of the mole. They pulled in the direction of the firing and were tumbled in a heap upon the rocks. Their boats were shivered: their ladders lost. Their powder was ruined. They were drenched to the skin. More like drowned rats than an invading army they yet pushed on and reached the public square which Nelson had appointed as a rendezvous. They waited expectantly, but found not a trace of him. Instead came the dawn to betray their misery. In all there were some 340 of them, a forlorn little band caught between the devil and the deep sea. For they could not go back; and they certainly could not go on. The Spaniards had at the lowest estimate 8,000 men, to say nothing of the citadel with its tiers and tiers of guns. But Nelson's second self was there, the gallant Troubridge. With sublime effrontery he sent a flag of truce to the Governor of the town to treat for terms. If the Spaniards, so ran his message, were prepared to supply his force with boats, then of his magnanimity he would promise to do the town of Santa Cruz no farther harm! Captain Samuel Hood bore the message, a cousin of the great Lord Hood with much of the family talent. The Governor was astonished. He pointed out that the British were at his mercy and must surrender in a body. "Not so," argued the ambassador; and in fluent Spanish: "My commandant allows you five minutes. If in that time you agree not to his terms, he will burn your city to the ground and charge with the bayonet."

The Governor made haste to conclude a bargain. Firing ceased and boats in sufficient number were collected beside the

fatal mole. Thither with all the honours of war Troubridge marched his force and embarked. His actual numbers when at last discovered only served to arouse in the Spaniards their natural admiration for heroic deeds. Each man of the 340 received a loaf of bread and a pint of wine. The wounded were cared for in the city hospitals and the Governor allowed his enemies to send ashore for all they required. Not to be outdone in chivalry Nelson offered to convey dispatches to Europe, and bore to Spain the earliest tidings of his own discomfiture.

The casualties were heavy, nearer a third than a quarter of the entire British force: and Nelson's wound was of itself sufficient to brand the affair as a disaster. Yet the repulse at Santa Cruz was in no sense a national calamity. It was not a set-back to any part of the general scheme of operations. It was certainly not a victory for the Spaniards. As a failure it belonged less to England than to Nelson personally. No one realized this better than Nelson himself. He did not excuse himself. He did not say, as he might have said, that the task was from the first impossible. He took upon his own shoulders the entire blame for whatever had gone amiss. In his public dispatch he gave a true account of the proceedings. He suppressed but a single detail. There was not one word about his arm.

To St. Vincent he poured out his heart; unburdened himself in this pathetic letter:—

Theseus, July 27, 1797.

My Dear Sir,

I am become a burden to my friends and useless to my country. . . . When I leave your command, I become dead to the world. I go hence and am no more seen. I hope you will be able to give me a frigate to convey the remains of my carcase to England. God bless you, my dear sir, and

Believe me,

Your most obliged and faithful

Horatio Nelson.

You will excuse my scrawl considering it is my first attempt.

St. Vincent would not listen to a word of self-disparagement. "'Tis not in mortals to command success," he quoted; but his Nelson had more than deserved it. He laughed to scorn the idea that a left-handed Admiral would never again be considered useful, and in making his report to Whitehall vowed the affair lent additional brilliance to the glory of British arms. As the

details of the memorable night became known it was generally agreed that Nelson's cypress crown became him as well as his laurels. Parliament granted him a pension of £1,000, and the Admiralty sent him congratulations. The Duke of Clarence with his own royal hand wrote to condole and compliment. Nelson assured him in reply that though he had lost a limb, not a particle of ardour had escaped through the leak.

Nelson arrived home on 1st September, but he was far too ill to receive or appreciate the adulation that men would have offered him. His operation had proved far from successful. In the murky depths of the cockpit, unlit save by tallow dips, the surgeon, labouring under difficulties had, when he bound the artery, taken up the nerve of the arm and gripped it tightly in the silken ligature. The pain caused was excruciating and never ceased for a moment, day or night. To obtain relief Nelson would willingly have undergone another operation, but there was already so little of the right arm remaining that any further operation was impossible. No comfort could be hoped for until the ligature came away, and the daily attempt of the surgeons to loosen it increased the nervous exhaustion of his suffering frame.

As the autumn waned the attention of all was turned to the North Sea where Duncan still maintained his close blockade. Nelson, always alive for news from the sea, was told one day that a battle was imminent. In his impulsive way he started up and, stretching out his unwounded limb, exclaimed: "I would give this other arm to be with Duncan".

He was lodging in Bond Street at the time, and when the news of Camperdown arrived and the town was illuminated, a surging mob came rolling along the street with noisy celebrations. Nelson had received a dose of laudanum and after a day of constant pain had just dropped off to sleep. The house was wrapped in darkness and the mob, hammering at the door, angrily demanded the reason. They were told that Admiral Nelson lay within suffering from a grievous wound. They apologized and departed silently: nor was the street disturbed again that night.

On 4th December the ligature came away of itself and released him at once from his agony. On the Sunday following the Rector of St. George's, Hanover Square, read out the following at Morning Service: "An officer desires to return thanks to Almighty God for

his perfect recovery from a severe wound and also for many mercies bestowed upon him".

With the improvement in his health Nelson was eager at once to be at work again. St. Vincent had already asked that he might return and it was the intention of the Admiralty to provide him with a ship worthy to carry his flag. The *Foudroyant* was named. But Nelson would not wait for her; would not wait for anything. He was mad to be gone and hoisted his flag in the first vessel ready; the *Vanguard*, a seventy-four. As his flag-captain he selected Berry who had backed him up so nobly at St. Vincent. Berry's appointment was approved and Nelson went with him to the royal levee. The King was very gracious and said how sorry he was that the Admiral had lost his right arm. "Yes!" said Nelson, and then with an admiring glance at Berry, "but not my right hand."

As he had not been in England since the beginning of the war, Nelson took the opportunity while he was in London to put in a demand for a year's pay in respect of the loss of his eye. He appeared in person to support his claim, but failed for the time to establish it, as he had omitted to present a medical certificate vouching for the loss of his sight. As the matter was one of common knowledge Nelson was naturally indignant. But as he visited his doctor a passing thought put him into good temper again. He straightway procured a formal certificate attesting the disappearance of his arm, lest some stupid official should doubt his statement when he put in a claim for that.

THE BATTLE OF THE NILE,
OR
THE BATTLE OF ABOUKIR BAY

AUGUST 1, 1798

Honor est a Nilo.
(ANAGRAM ON NELSON'S NAME BY DR. BURNEY.)

Nelson was ready at the end of March, but storms set in and for ten days the *Vanguard* tugged idly at her cables. Nelson suffered severely from sea-sickness, with him a constant trouble when to rough weather was added the bane of idleness. On 9th April he sailed and three weeks later was at Cadiz. St. Vincent

had urgent work and sent him straight off at once. Rumours had come from Toulon of extensive preparations and he desired to know what they meant.

Mischief beyond doubt was afoot, and Bonaparte at the bottom of it. His wonderful Italian campaign by driving Austria out of the war left England the sole antagonist of France; and the Directory, anxious to proceed with their invasion scheme, offered to set him at the head of it. But Bonaparte refused. He was unwilling to base his plans for the future on so shaky a foundation as that afforded by the allied fleet after the upheavals of Jervis and Duncan. He had an alternative plan, rainbow-coloured and ambitious. The Turkish Empire was tottering. Out of it might be carved an oversea dominion greater than Britain's, one that should hold the East in fee and sway the farthest shores of the Levant. For patriotic Frenchmen the prospect glittered with attractions: to Bonaparte the enterprise beckoned as with the finger of destiny. He saw a vision of the future: himself a new Mohammed or Alexander wearing a turban, riding on an elephant, writing a new Koran to fit his needs, and receiving the adoration of prostrate millions. So he urged the rulers of France to strike at Egypt, to strike without delay while yet the English, blinded by the menace nearer home, left the Mediterranean unguarded and unwatched.

The rulers of France were infected with his enthusiasm. The mighty *Sans-culotte* of one hundred and twenty guns was cleansed of Jacobin associations and re-christened *L'Orient* to honour the occasion. Round her gathered fifteen sail of the line, fourteen frigates, and fifty smaller vessels. Four hundred transports assembled to carry the troops, and 36,000 troops made ready to embark. Every road leading to Toulon was filled with lumbering wagons. Every wharf groaned under its mountain of baggage. Cavalry horses, draught horses, and artillery teams waited their turn to go on board: and from the four corners of France there came a motley crowd of astronomers, aeronauts, historians, antiquaries, geometricians, mineralogists, chemists, cartographers and engineers!

To command the ships Bonaparte's choice fell on one whom he had already tried in the Italian campaign, one of the few nobles who had passed through all proscriptions unscathed, François Paul Admiral Comte de Brueys, a brave sailor of ripe experience,

a man of quick judgment, a commander, according to Napoleon, whom no one would disobey twice.

The Directory kept their secret well. Even the staff officers were left in complete ignorance as to where they were going. Nelson kept St. Vincent posted with all that he discovered, the number of ships, their quality, their complements: but the mystery of their destination he was quite unable to fathom. St. Vincent thought the Toulon fleet would sail for the Straits and Brest.

At such a moment in her history England by her endeavours set Europe an example. Though all other Powers submitted to France, she would not stoop to do so. Submit! It was now that she abandoned her defensive attitude: it was now that she retraced the false step made in 1796. Only by re-establishing her ascendancy in Southern Europe could she hope to bring pressure to bear on France; and the activity in Toulon, whatever it might mean, offered occasion for interference. "The appearance of a British squadron in the Mediterranean," wrote the First Lord to St. Vincent, "is a condition on which the fate of Europe may at this moment be stated to depend." He promised the Admiral important reinforcements and bade him take a fleet worthy of the occasion. But Cadiz must not be neglected. St. Vincent might even prefer to stay there himself. "If," concluded the First Lord, "you determine to send a detachment into the Mediterranean, I think it almost unnecessary to suggest to you the propriety of putting it under the command of Sir Horatio Nelson."

St. Vincent had in part anticipated orders. Nelson was already in the Great Sea. But for the time being he had with him only two seventy-fours; the *Orion*, Sir James Saumarez, and the *Alexander*, Captain Ball. These with three frigates and the *Vanguard* comprised his entire force.

The bad luck which attended him at Teneriffe seemed hard to shake off. Just as the French completed their preparations a storm arose and swept him out to sea. In a short time the *Vanguard* was wrecked; her foremast gone, her bowsprit sprung, her main and mizen topmasts by the board. Troubles never come singly. The frigates, seeing her plight, concluded Nelson would fall back on Gibraltar and without orders returned in a body. They gave no notice of their movements. They disappeared, leaving

their Admiral bewildered; for the nature of the crisis before all else demanded the quick transmission of intelligence.

Nelson threw the *Alexander* a towing-rope and bade her drag the *Vanguard* under the lee of some islets off the south-west end of Sardinia. The journey proved difficult and at one stage the heavy swell made it all but impossible. Nelson ordered Captain Ball to cast off and shift for himself. Ball refused. He meant to save the *Vanguard* or go down with her. They struggled on and at last, with perils over, dropped anchor in a tranquil bay. Nelson hastened on board the *Alexander*. He embraced Captain Ball affectionately. "A friend in need is a friend," he said.

All records were surpassed in refitting. The carpenters excelled themselves. A maintop did duty for a foremast. Topgallants replaced the missing spars. The bowsprit was cunningly fished: and in four days the vessel was jury-rigged and off to sea again. On the 21st May they had left Toulon: on the 31st they were back.

But the French had come out and, eluding pursuit, had gone! Who should say where!

Nelson had little enough to guide him. He argued that the enemy would hardly have waited for the absence of a squadron so tiny as his. They were much more likely to have timed their departure for a moment when the wind assisted them. Now the wind that had driven him from his station had been from the north-west. This would hardly help them in any excursion through the Straits to Brest and the Channel. On this shred of evidence he based a conclusion. It was the kingdom of the Two Sicilies that was in danger. Turning his ships round the north of Corsica he set every stitch of canvas that his rickety spars would bear and steered for the Bay of Naples.

Off Elba he was joined by his good angel, Thomas Hardy, in the little brig *Mutine*. Hardy brought the great news. His squadron of observation was to be increased without delay to the dimensions of a battle fleet; and St. Vincent to provide a weapon worthy of the Mediterranean had selected "choice fellows" from his "Chosen Band". With them, ran Hardy's message, Nelson was to seek and find the French, and "TAKE, SINK, BURN, OR DESTROY THEM".

This commission made Nelson a proud man. Without losing

touch with one another he and Ball and Saumarez spread out their arms as widely as they could to catch the coming fleet, and on 7th June the *Vanguard* was greeted by ten seventy-fours and a fifty. It was a happy day, this 7th June: for the men who joined him were the very men whom Nelson would have selected to compose the ideal fleet: his "Band of Brothers" he learned to call them in that affectionate way of his. Collingwood, it is true, was not there. He still remained at St. Vincent's side; disappointment gnawing at his heart. That St. Vincent could not spare him weighed as nothing: that the Admiralty had already marked him out for a flag would have counted for little had he known it. He wanted to sail where Nelson sailed. He asked for nothing else. But if Collingwood was left behind there was Captain Troubridge, son of Anak, in the *Culloden;* and Captain Miller brought the *Theseus* in which he and Nelson had quelled the mutiny and sailed to Teneriffe. There was gaunt "Ben" Hallowell in the *Swiftsure*, and Samuel Hood the less, Troubridge's messenger at Santa Cruz; and if last, not least, Captain Foley of the *Goliath*, another of those gigantic men who seem by some mysterious law to have gravitated toward Nelson: a splendid creature, wondrously handsome, with a peculiar knack of insinuating his vast bulk into the warmest corner available. He had been as a youth with Keppel at Ushant. He had been with Rodney at the "Moonlight Battle". He had been with Hood at Frigate Bay. He had seen the carnage at the battle of The Saints; done his best to keep the French out of Toulon; and fought as flag-captain of the *Britannia* with Jervis off Cape St. Vincent.

To say truth there is not one commander who should be named before another. From Sir James Saumarez, second-in-command, to Captain Hardy of the brig *Mutine*, they were all quickly caught by the Nelson spirit. The same influence that in old days made every "Agamemnon" a willing slave now radiated like sunshine through the fleet and created a new fellowship, worthy to compare with Charlemagne's Paladins, or the Knights of the Round Table.

The first part of Nelson's quest was completed in the Bay of Naples. There were no French there and Nelson did not stop. Yet he had business with the Neapolitan Court. Operating so many miles to the eastward of Gibraltar he needed the use of harbours for his ships. He sent Troubridge ashore as ambassa-

dor. But things had altered since he himself had visited the place in the year that Toulon fell. Italy from the Alps southward was changed by Bonaparte's campaign in Lombardy. North Italy was transformed into the Cis-Alpine Republic and Naples had consented to a pact with the French by which she was forbidden to open her harbours to more anti-Jacobin vessels than four at a time. Troubridge sensibly pointed out that the only deliverance from the yoke of France lay with the British fleet. But with Bonaparte at large in the neighbourhood the Neapolitans, not without cause, clung to neutrality. More valuable than their protestations of goodwill was a hint from Sir William Hamilton. He knew no more than any one else what the French were after, but he suggested a raid on Malta.

This was the right clue at last and with straining masts and swelling sails Nelson ran through the Straits of Messina.

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The chase was held up by a serious check off the coast of Sicily. They were in the neighbourhood of Cape Passaro scene of a great past victory, when news reached them that Malta had already fallen; Malta, that had been bravely held against all odds ever since it was given to the Hospitallers by the Emperor Charles V. The Grand Master had proved unworthy of his predecessors and the famous Knights of St. John had laid down their arms within forty-eight hours of Napoleon's first appearance. This in all conscience was puzzling enough. But there was other food for astonishment. A garrison of 4,000 French had been landed: but the rest of the expeditionary force had vanished like ghosts at daybreak.

If there was one period of Nelson's life at which the favour of the populace deserted him, it was at this. Men said that the Mediterranean command called for ripe experience and proved sagacity. It was folly to have sent so ridiculously young a man. The French were playing with him. He had lost his head: did not know what to do. They cursed him for folly and carelessness. They were haunted with fears that the Corsican would appear unexpectedly in Plymouth Sound.

The position was acknowleged by the highest authorities to be one of profound difficulty: and the French had disappeared beyond the penetrating ken of prophets. Very good! Then, to

reveal his genius and exalt his name to the stars, Nelson off Cape Passaro on 22nd June, had but to decide unerringly where the French expedition had gone. They might have returned to Toulon or they might have doubled back to Naples. They might be in the Adriatic or the Gulf of Tuscany. They might have turned west to Carthagena or made sail to Constantinople. They might in fact have gone anywhere from one end of the world to the other: but probability with some insistence pointed west to the Straits and beyond.

Nelson went east to Egypt!

The composition of the French expedition had struck him as remarkable. There were 40,000 soldiers; sufficient for an invasion of England. But an army to invade England would not have embarked at Toulon. Some other big country then was to be occupied. But there were only twelve battleships. Clearly the soldiers were not going through fleet-infested seas. If rumour said true, there were philologists and scientists. Some land in the Orient then? What did Saumarez think? Saumarez thought the French would like to turn us out of India. And the road to India lay through Egypt! Promptings such as these had their influence with Nelson. But this also must be said. Never was there warrior since the world began in whose soul burned so steadily the flame of purest patriotism. He was always ready to sacrifice everything to his country's necessity, his ship, his fleet, his wealth, his health, his friends, his life, all he loved best, all he treasured most. He allowed nothing to obscure his vision when he thought of England's need. So was he enabled to see clearer than other men where England's danger lay, and to unmask the designs of England's enemies with a faculty almost superhuman.

We know now that Nelson was perfectly right. We know that when he himself turned east he was treading in the very footsteps of the French. We know that he actually outsailed them, and passed them on the way. That was not his fault. He longed to find them on the great deep. He craved "to try Boney on a wind". Had he done so, Napoleon and his mighty expedition would have been quenched like a Pharaoh's host. But Nelson had been deserted by his frigates. He was obliged to keep his fighting force together. He passed the French and, posting ahead, reached Alexandria before them.

Empty harbours! It is easy to imagine his abject misery. He had staked all on this throw and was wrong! Modesty came to reproach him; whispered that this, like his shipwreck, was heaven's reminder that he was apt to over-rate his poor abilities.

If he had but waited a single day the French would have come like sheep to the slaughter.* But he would not wait a day. He zigzagged across to the Syrian shore, circled the Levant, flew down the wind when it favoured him, beat in its teeth when foul. A thousand miles he went untired, relentless. The strain was unnerving. Saumarez, a giant beside his chief, confessed himself worn with fatigue. Yet it was not on his shoulders that the responsibility lay. And ever they toiled like Samson with blind eyes. "Was I to die this moment," said Nelson, "want of frigates would be found stamped on my heart."

After three weeks' wandering they were back in Sicilian waters and appeared off Syracuse. The ships were famished. Nelson was in the deepest depths of disappointment. And Syracuse was a neutral port. War vessels never entered it. It was said there was not depth enough. In any case not more than four could enter at a time. There was a prospect of month-long delays.

The story of Syracuse is an old one now: how they entered in spite of difficulties, not four at a time but all together: how they watered the fleet, 250 tons per ship, every drop by manual labour: how they obtained fresh food, and in five days were gone again: all this is well known. Yet men still debate how it was done. Nelson attributed the miracle to Lady Hamilton. Lady Hamilton persuaded the Queen and the Queen gave orders to open her harbour—without the sanction of her Ministers, without the knowledge of the King, in defiance of engagements with France. As the battle of the Nile turned upon the watering at Syracuse, Nelson always spoke of Lady Hamilton as one who shared the glories of the victory, and as one entitled quite as much as himself to the gratitude of England.

Syracuse could supply no news of Napoleon's team: and this confirmed Nelson in his opinion that somewhere in the Levant

* Nelson left Egypt on 30th June. Napoleon arrived on 1st July, seized Alexandria the following day, and on 21st July defeated the Mamelukes decisively at the Battle of the Pyramids.

their object lay. Watering done, he plunged again eastward resolute to leave no nook or cranny unexplored.

He must not be pictured during this wearisome search as sitting in his cabin, disconsolate, apart. Hardly a day passed without his summoning all his captains to his side. He took them wholly into his confidence. He told them all that was in his mind. He set before them plans of the enemy's fleet in every conceivable position; in the open sea or in harbour, to windward of him or to leeward. He had schemes to meet every emergency: and with infinite patience, lucidity and tact he explained to every member of his brotherhood exactly what he hoped and meant to do. He did not propound a scheme and leave them to make what they could of it. He did not insist peremptorily upon its punctilious execution. He asked advice, accepted suggestions and thought one hour or half a day well spent, if he could give a better notion of the plan that he had formed; or even clear up a minor point to the satisfaction of a single person. So perfectly at last did all understand that the use of signals promised to become superfluous. The fleet was no longer an aggregation of units; but a perfect body, every limb and member acting in magnetic response to the invisible control of the brain.

The first certain news was obtained off the south coast of Greece. Troubridge brought it. The French he learned had been seen about a month before with sails set towards Egypt. This was good news enough but, as if to give each man a chance of drinking success to the enterprise, Troubridge picked up a vessel with a cargo of wine. He bent a hawser and tugged her astern.

On 1st August the minarets of Alexandria were visible from the *Vanguard*. The harbour seemed to be full of ships and at ten o'clock Nelson detached the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* to run in and reconnoitre. They sent back word "No sail of the Line!" and as if doomed to perpetual disappointment, the British fleet carried on. But at three o'clock all was changed. The *Goliath* and *Zealous* leading the line had clearly something to report. The *Goliath* fumbled her halyards in her eagerness: the *Zealous* was calmer. "Sixteen sail," she signalled, "in Aboukir Bay!" and each ship that followed gave three British cheers. There were still fifteen miles to be traversed, and Nelson ordered dinner to be served.

Aboukir Bay is situated on the western coast-curve of the delta of the Nile. It is some sixteen miles in width and its sweeping curve is defined on the one side by the Rosetta mouth of the Nile, and on the other by Aboukir Point tip-tilted to the north of east. This cape is effectually prolonged seawards by a line of rocks and reefs that end in what has since been christened Nelson's Island. Already in 1798 the bay was silted up by the sand of a tideless sea, but under the western promontory the shoals

ABOUKIR BAY

were so arranged as to provide a cosy inner recess, a semicircular sanctuary.

Here Admiral Brueys ensconced himself, and here on the 1st of August he watched his foes draw near. He did not expect them. Nelson's first visit to Alexandria and instantaneous departure he had interpreted as evidence of flight. For some reason or other, he reasoned, the British were intent on avoiding him. He did not even send out frigates to scout and bring him news. At the moment when Nelson's sails rose above the horizon he was

holding a council. He was not making schemes to repel attack, or strengthen his own position. He was seeking advice as to the most picturesque mode of celebrating through the fleet Napoleon's victory at the Pyramids.

The dressing committee quickly resolved itself into a council of war. Speeches were hurried, but after all there was no cause for alarm. The enemy had caught them napping, but in every other respect the odds were on their side. They had a finer fleet than their adversaries.* Not that they put any dependence on that: bulky French ships had before now yielded to lesser Englishmen. What they did view with complacent satisfaction was the prospect of fighting their inveterate foes without the uneasiness born of inferior seamanship. They were at anchor. Their sails were furled. They needed no hands aloft. Every man could be stationed at the guns. There would be no struggle for position; no tacking, no wearing. With springs on their cables they could move this way and that,† while the British offered a vista of targets with their canvas sheeted home.

But most of all Brueys trusted his position. The friendly shoals guarded his rear and guarded his flanks. He was assailable only by a frontal attack. And if the enemy ventured on a frontal attack they would labour under every disadvantage; the inferiority of their ships, their vulnerability under sail, the labour of navigating them, to say nothing of the batteries he had erected on the island which would sweep them with an enfilading fire.‡

As he completed his arrangements with a flurried haste pardonable under the circumstances, Nelson arose from the dinner-table with words of breezy confidence. He did not then know the

* The English had thirteen seventy-fours and a fifty; the French eight seventy-fours, three eighties, and *L'Orient* (120).

† SPRING, a hawser led from aft and made fast to the cable so as to turn the ship in any direction when she is at anchor.

‡ On two occasions during the American War English fleets were challenged to fight from positions similar to that which Brueys held. In the Grand Cul-de-Sac of St. Lucia, Barrington, with an insignificant force, had beaten off the impetuous dare-devil D'Estaing with annoying facility, and in Frigate Bay, St. Kitts, the best efforts of De Grasse had only proved the impossibility of ousting an anchored fleet. Brueys' line on the present occasion was bent into a very obtuse angle with the *Orient* at the apex, which seems to show that he was consciously imitating Hood's disposition in Frigate Bay.

actual numbers of the French.* But he cared not how many they were. Whatever their numbers he intended to outnumber them! He intended to attack their van and match two British ships with every French. More than one great sailor had attempted before to concentrate the whole of his force on a part of the enemy's: and in more than one battle in days gone by ships had doubled or tried to double. But even by Rodney the manœuvre had never been successfully executed—without some lucky unforeseen accompaniment. On what then did Nelson rely to accomplish what had never before been done? He brought the breeze along with him from a little to the west of north, and as the enemy's ships were drawn up from north to south he could plant his ships wherever he chose on either side of their line. He could not have done so had they been in motion. But his chief hope of success in the coming fray was based upon that very property which the Frenchmen valued most—their immobility. The part attacked could not run away, nor the part unmolested move to their relief. Their election to fight at anchor was to prove their own undoing.

But Brueys thought his flank and rear impregnable, girt about as they were with shoals. According to the text-books they were impregnable. But what of the quicksands of the Kentish Knock? What of the reefs of Quiberon? Did these deliver De With or Conflans out of the hands of the British? Blake took the wind into his confidence and coaxed it to blow him off the bank. Hawke "took the foe for pilot and the cannon's glare for light". And Nelson had taught his captains that "Where there is room for a Frenchman to swing, there is room for a Briton to anchor". By that he meant that the interval between an enemy's ship and the shoal was not an undiscoverable quantity, but a circle whose radius was equal to the distance between bowsprit and anchor-buoy; and that within its limits any ship of his could pass or take up her position with safety.

Nelson issued most careful arrangements for anchoring his ships as soon as they reached a position agreeable to their purpose. They were to anchor not as usual by the bow, but by the stern.

* The *Zealous* reported "Sixteen sail". Seventeen was the actual number, but four of these were frigates moored between the warships and the land.

For in so doing they would be pulled up sharp and economize their sea-room : they would be prevented from swinging round to the wind in the face of a raking fire : and by the simple expedient of shortening or paying out cable they could alter their position on the field of battle as the exigencies of the moment demanded.

Vainly then did Brueys trust that the circumstances of the coming fight would neutralize the British talent for seamanlike conduct.

There was, however, one safeguard for the French not yet enumerated. The hour was late. The waning summer afternoon was drawing to a close. Soon would come sunset and with it instant darkness, for there is but short twilight in the latitude of Alexandria. The French, anchored at safe distances from one another, had nothing to fear. It was otherwise with the English.

But Nelson was quite prepared to fight in the dark. The peril was great : but he welcomed it. Darkness, he laughingly argued, would handicap both sides and therefore serve as a positive advantage to the better of the two. He took a simple precaution. He ordered in each ship a cross-bar to be slung with four ship's lanterns horizontally : and this he directed to be hoisted to the mizen-peak so that Britons might recognize their fellows. And in every vessel too, while some sanded the decks, others at his orders lighted lanterns and lashed them firmly to the side of the ship, one over every gun.

Thus they went down to fight the French.

It was about half-past six that the fight began The first shot was fired by Brueys' island batteries. The English bore down before the wind in death-like silence. Hands in the channels were heaving the lead and hands up aloft furling sail. Still they came on and not a gun spoke. In vain had Brueys placed in the centre of the line the hundred guns of the *Orient* and an eighty on either side. It was not on them that the blow was to fall. Captain Foley in the *Goliath* led the British line. His glance was bent on the *Guerrier*, the tip of the French left wing. The *Guerrier* blazed away, but he answered not. He was searching through his glass for the anchor-buoy. He found it and kept his rudder steady. He curved round the head of the French line with the assured touch of an old hand who had ten times been over the course. The French were amazed ; but not as impressed

as they would have been had they known that the British were without a single chart. They fully believed that their adversaries had on board accredited pilots, and they marvelled whence the pilots came.

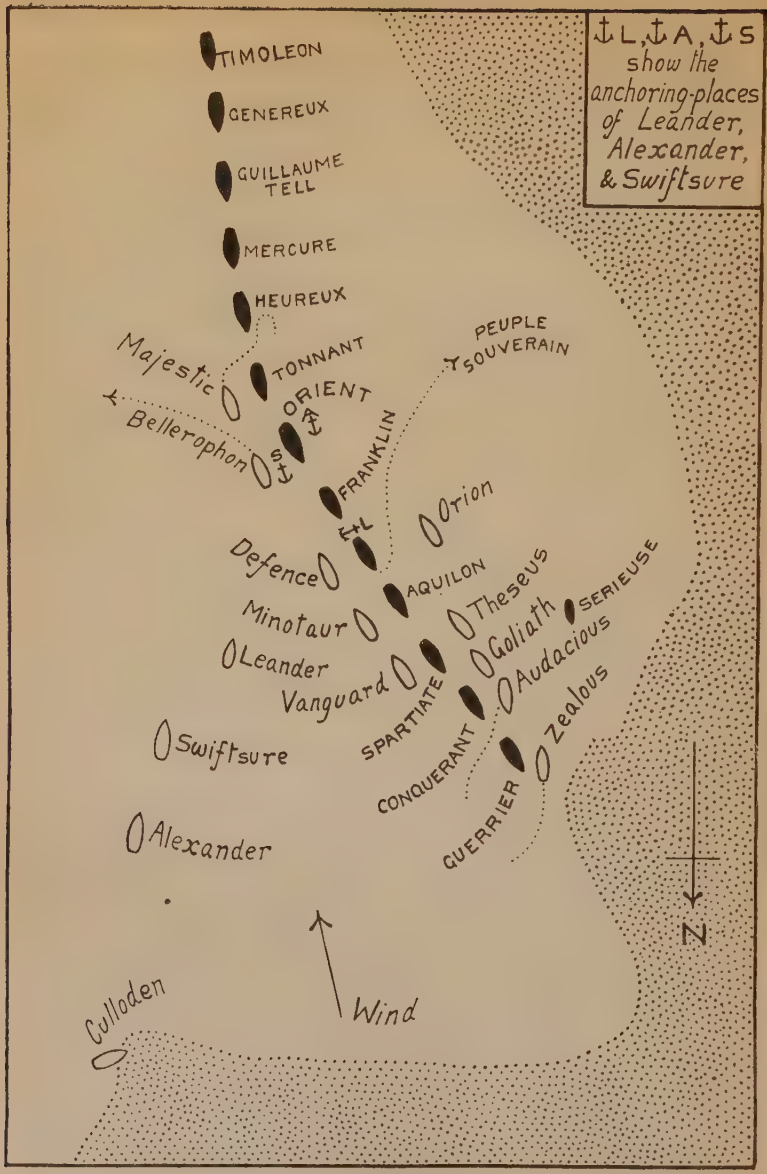
Foley curved round the head of the French line, following Nelson's instructions to the letter. And as he came athwart-hawse of the *Guerrier* he let forth in one thunderous burst all the pent-up energies of the *Goliath*. He raked the *Guerrier* from stem to stern, so that the men dropped beside their guns and the stout planks shivered into splinters. Then the *Goliath* put up her helm and passing on the larboard side of her antagonist, dropped anchor by the stern.

As she did so the sun sank into the sea, lighting up the English sails with a parting caress of gold.

All the first five sail of the British line passed inside the French formation. There was no running aground; no mishap of any kind. The *Guerrier*, groaning from the *Goliath's* wounds, groaned again as the *Zealous* raked her. Captain Hood brought up in five fathoms only, grazing the bottom with his keel. Satisfied with this position he lay on the port bow of the *Guerrier* and blew a hole in her side big enough for "a coach and four to be driven through". Then, as if to prove that British marksmen needed no sail-targets to help their aim, he rolled the foremast out of her into the darkening sea. All this in five minutes; so that lusty cheers arose from the Britons in his wake.

Among these Captain Miller of the *Theseus* noted that the elevation of the *Guerrier's* guns as she aimed at his predecessors was inclined too high. He put his helm over a trifle more and, glutting his guns, ran under the arch of her fire. At point-blank range he hit out with double-shotted, treble-shotted broadside. Down came mizen, and down came main. What but an hour before had been a proud-looking vessel of France was now a sheer hulk with gaping sides, a pitiful derelict.

It is an oft-quoted remark that at the battle of the Nile every one of Nelson's ships found means to distinguish herself. The *Audacious* gained an early opportunity. She was one of the five destined to engage on the side of the shoals. But she found her own way there: a new and original way. She cut between the *Guerrier* and the next French ship, the *Conquérant*. She raked



THE BATTLE OF THE NILE
August 1, 1798

the stricken *Guerrier* from stern to bow, and the *Conquérant* from bow to stern. Dropping anchor she slung round with nose to the wind and lay on the port bow of the *Conquérant*. As Foley had already planted himself on that same ship's miserable quarter, the *Conquérant*, like the *Guerrier*, found the odds too heavy for her.

Captain Miller meanwhile had carried the *Theseus* a step farther and dropped anchor alongside of the *Spartiate*. The first three ships of the French array were thus matched with four opponents. Themselves brave ships they were ready to fight as brave ships should: but they were terribly handicapped, for they had been led by Admiral Brueys to believe that the fighting would be with their starboard batteries and their starboard batteries alone. To larboard, their guns were not even unlimbered. Many were hampered with furniture and cumbered with tackle and useless gear. No time this to drag the port-lids up when the British broadsides battered from without.

And now the four Britons within the shoals were joined by one of the hardest hitters that ever sailed the seas, Captain Sir James Saumarez in the *Orion*. He slipped through the strait gate under cover of the *Zealous* and her friends: and received his first blow from the *Sérieuse*, a pugnacious little frigate. Frigates in the hour of battle were drawn up on the disengaged side of their line, where they lay in comparative safety. Tradition debarred them from active operations, and so far as the British were concerned Nelson's two-sided attack on this occasion made no change in the ordinary rule. But the *Sérieuse* was over-bold. She fired a round at the *Goliath* who took not the smallest notice: and when the *Orion* swung past, she presumptuously matched herself with a second giant. Saumarez for a while would not reply. But as the *Sérieuse* continued her attentions, he left his course and porting his helm, went shoalwards to pay her a visit.

He waited till he was close alongside and then his broadside blared with a crashing smash as if a hundred doors had been shattered by a hundred crowbars. The *Sérieuse*, filling at once, settled down by the head.

Having thus read his lesson to meddlers Sir James returned to his proper sphere. But his detour had taken him a little too far, and when he reached the battleship belt he anchored not alongside of the fourth French ship, but the fifth, the *Peuple Souverain*.

Between his ship and Captain Miller's lay the *Aquilon*—unmarked.

Five British sail were now engaged all on the inner side of the French. Nelson himself came next. He had hoisted six flags in the *Vanguard*, so that if by chance five were shot away it might not be thought he had surrendered; and at his masthead flew his favourite signal, "Engage the enemy more closely!"

Nelson laid his ship on Brueys' outer seaward side: the first to do so. He intended himself to lead the way into the thick of the enemy's fire; and he calculated that of his fourteen ships the half were now engaged; for the *Leander* (fifty) hardly counted as a ship, and the *Alexander* and the *Swiftsure*, whom he had sent to look into Alexandria, were miles astern. No one could tell the hour of their arrival.

His estimate unfortunately had been rendered still more exact by a calamity. Troubridge, the light of his eye, had run aground in the *Culloden*. It will be remembered that when the enemy were discovered he was towing a cargo of wine. He cast off at once and made all sail, but he had been thrown behind and when the *Goliath* opened fire was not yet round Aboukir Point. Darkness was upon the sea to render his task more difficult, and though he sounded a careful way the water shoaled at the point with startling suddenness and left him stranded. To one so much in love with fighting this was a cruel blow. Captain Hardy in his little brig wrestled with cables and ropes, a mouse helping a lion. But all in vain. Nothing could be done. Troubridge wondered what Nelson would think of him: and sorrowfully recalled the happier day when they drubbed the don together at St. Vincent.

Not blame but pity was what Nelson felt. It was Captain Troubridge's misfortune, he afterwards wrote, to run aground "while his more fortunate companions were in the full tide of happiness".

In the full tide of happiness! When Nelson reached the firing-line victory had already begun to declare itself. According to his original scheme his own place would have been on the starboard quarter of the *Guerrier*. But the *Guerrier* had little fight left in her: and the *Conquérant* was no better off. There was no use in wasting shot on them. So he carried on to the *Spar-*

tiate and anchored alongside. In doing so he put the wretched ship between two fires, for Miller from the side of the shoals already bombarded her. But next to the *Spartiate* came the *Aquilon*, and the *Aquilon* was unmarked. Seeing a grand opportunity she slewed herself round by the springs on her cable until she lay under the *Vanguard's* very bows. From this commanding position she raked the British flagship with galling effect. The forecastle men were mown down and, seeing the utter helplessness of their position, looked pathetically at the commander-in-chief as if to ask whether this sacrifice were according to his will. He could not help them. No one could help them. Captain Berry grew anxious, and at last sought permission to change the position of the ship. But Nelson would not move. "No, no!" he said. "It is all right. Louis will soon be here!" Louis was captain of the *Minotaur*, Nelson's second astern.

It was pitch dark now, and though Louis might see the four lanterns at the *Vanguard's* mizen peak he could not tell what she suffered on her decks. But not in vain did Nelson trust him. Dropping anchor he so pounded the *Aquilon* that first he drew her fire and then distracted her entire attention from the *Vanguard* to himself. And somewhat about the same time Miller divined the peril of his chief and, paying out cable, changed his place so that he too could help to quell the furious ardour of the Frenchman. Thus *Theseus* and *Minotaur* fought in company to shield the Admiral!

It is not exactly known at what hour Nelson was wounded. He was standing near the main-hatch at the time and giving his whole mind to the direction of the fight. Suddenly he was struck by a piece of langridge. The missile slashed his forehead like a scalping knife and a large flap of flesh fell over his one good eye blinding him utterly. Nelson fell and falling was caught in Berry's arms. The flow of blood was so great and the pain so excruciating that he made sure he must be dying and whispered into Berry's ear his last wishes.

Then they bore him to the cockpit and the surgeon at once left what he was doing and ran to his aid. But Nelson would not suffer any tampering with custom. "No!" he said, "I will take my turn with my brave fellows." So he waited patiently: but he kept on asking that Captain Louis might be summoned, for Cap-

tain Louis, he said, had saved the *Vanguard* and he must thank him before he died. The meeting of the two drew tears from all.

The surgeon, on examining the injury, declared that he would beyond all doubt recover. The wound, he declared, was not even dangerous. Nelson tried to believe him, but his agony was very great. He allowed himself to be carried to the biscuit-room,* and there for a time he lay more dead than alive. But soon his spirit began to re-assert itself and he sent for his secretary that he might dictate dispatches. The secretary was unnerved by the distressing condition of his master, and found it quite impossible to proceed. Nelson permitted him to go, and, though he could barely see at all, traced the letters with his slow left hand; "Almighty God," he began to write, "has blessed his Majesty's arms . . ."

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There still needed three more ships on the outer side to balance those on the inner. Of these the *Defence* was the first to arrive. She passed on the disengaged side of the *Vanguard* and dropped anchor abreast of the *Peuple Souverain*. The *Peuple Souverain* had already rather more than she cared about, for within her guard was the *Orion* deluging her decks with blood. The arrival of the *Defence* made her eventual surrender as positive a certainty as that of the *Guerrier*, *Conquérant*, *Spartiate*, and *Aquilon*.

Astern of the *Defence* came the *Bellerophon* and astern of the *Bellerophon* the *Majestic*. These two ships were destined to suffer a harder fate than their friends: for, wherever they went, they were compelled to fight unaided and alone. They had no "double" on the inner side of the French as had the *Vanguard*, *Minotaur*, and *Defence*. The resistance they met and their punishment serve better than words to show how Brueys intended to fight the English if only they had joined issue with him in the way he himself intended.

It will simplify matters to take first the case of the *Majestic*. Following the lights of the *Bellerophon* she kept to seaward when the *Bellerophon* drew up: and then dropped anchor as she saw through the gloom the dark outline of the *Tonnant*, one of Brueys' seconds. There was only time for a broadside. The *Majestic's* anchor would not hold. She drifted on and in an evil hour ran

* A tin-lined cavity in the hold.

full tilt into the side of the *Heureux*. Her wicked bowsprit hooked itself into the Frenchman's rigging which held her end on in the jaws of death. She was raked with grisly effect and her Captain went down among the rest, killed by a musket-ball.* In time, however, she burst her way free and, swinging round, took up a new position bow to bow on the side of the shoals. Here she was able to fight on something like equality.

But to return to the *Bellerophon*. It was quite dark when she reached the scene of action: and maybe it was quite by accident that instead of dropping anchor by the *Franklin* she laid herself alongside of the *Orient*. It may have been: and it may have been part of her invincible dogged fighting quality. It was really quite absurd to suppose that she could match herself with Brueys' flag. The metal thrown from the *Orient's* lower-deck by itself outweighed her broadside. If he had been able, Captain Darby would have laid himself on the mighty Frenchman's bows. But like the *Majestic's* his anchor would not hold and he brought up beam to beam nearly touching. This was just what Brueys had prayed for. He gave the *Bellerophon* a broadside; paused a second; then gave her another. Eight guns on board the *Bellerophon* were dismounted.

Dismounted! They were broken in pieces: their muzzles shattered like earthenware crocks. Captain Darby was carried unconscious below. One lieutenant was killed; two wounded; the master was wounded and the bos'n and the Captain of Marines. The "Ruffians" were stung with the very madness of heroism. They fought like demons. The first lieutenant took command. He was wounded: would not leave his place: bound up his wound and remained. Then his leg was torn off, and as he was carried below a grape shot passed through his lungs and killed him and the man who carried him. The second lieutenant was summoned and conducted the fight. As he reached the deck the mizen went and the *Bellerophon* reeled at the loss. Ten minutes

* One of the first tasks Nelson set himself on his return home was to visit the relatives of Captain Westcott. They were simple folk living at Honiton. Nelson asked them to dine with him at the village inn. After dinner he asked the Captain's mother if she had received the medal to which her son was entitled. When she answered him no, he took his own from his breast and presented it to her; hoping she would not think less of it because he had worn it himself.

later without warning the main came down, killing the lieutenant in charge and littering the deck with wreckage. Then the third lieutenant directed the fight, for still the fight went on. The enemy hurled incendiary bombs and the *Bellerophon* caught fire: but they quenched the flames. One third of the company were killed or wounded and still the "Billy Ruff'ns" went on fighting.* They fought as long as men could fight: and when at last they could fight no more, they cut their cable and setting their spritsail departed. As they did so the foremast went by the board: and the *Bellerophon* bowed her head as if ashamed to go when there was need to stay. But never was nobler fight conducted in the face of odds. The praise of the plucky ship rang through the fleet; and in after days they learned to say "No man can be a coward on board the *Bellerophon*".

Such sterling gallantry is never wasted. The *Bellerophon's* defence played an important part in the consummation of the victory; for it kept the French Commander-in-Chief fully employed at a crucial moment. At a crucial moment it held him engaged while Nelson's reserve hastened up to destroy him.

Far away in the rear, Troubridge, eager to do what he could, played the part of recruiting sergeant or officer in command at the base. Dispensing with the proffered help of the *Leander* he sent the little fifty to represent himself. The *Leander* arrived at a critical moment. For an hour and a half the *Peuple Souverain* had fought the *Defence* and *Orion*. They had all but crushed the resistance out of her when Saumarez with a fortunate shot cut her cable as with a knife. The *Peuple Souverain* drifted helplessly towards the shallows and left behind her a yawning gap in the very midst of the line. Was the little *Leander* eyed like a cat? Could she see this gap through the dark? She certainly pushed her way straight into it; and anchoring herself at right angles to the French, raked them up and raked them down; raked them forwards and raked them backwards; raked them this way and raked them that. So weak herself that any French ship could have crushed her under heel, she yet wrought all the damage of which she was capable without suffering a scratch, like a gadfly perched on a horse's back just out of reach of his tail.

* The *Bellerophon's* casualties amounted to twenty-five per cent of the total English loss.

If Troubridge could not be present himself he had found a very efficient substitute! And with timely beacons he saved Captain Ball and Captain Hallowell from sharing his unhappy fate. He guided them safely round the shoal; whipped them up and hurried them on.

The first vessel that Hallowell found among the shadows was a ship in actual movement. He strained his eyes through his night-glasses to see what he could make of her. The seamen all stood by their guns waiting his word to fire. But Hallowell hesitated. He could not quite make the vessel out. She seemed like a Frenchman; she had no four lights at the mizen peak and she was without doubt gravely wounded. Yet he was not sure. So he seized up his trumpet, and at the top of his voice bellowed out "What ship is that?" And faintly through the rumbling medley of sounds came the answer "*Bellerophon!* Going out of action disabled!"

This was enough for Hallowell and he plunged into the fray to take the *Bellerophon's* place. With precise skill he laid the *Swiftsure* on the starboard bow of the *Orient* and Captain Ball in the *Alexander* thrust his way through the French and laid himself on her larboard quarter. They had arrived in the very nick of time.

Though she had now an enemy on either side the *Orient* was not outmatched; for a first-rate of her noble proportions was the equal of any two seventy-fours afloat. And Brueys fought like a tiger. Three times he was struck on that fatal night. The first time he was wounded in the head. But he cared not. Then a musket-bullet shattered his hand; and he bound it together with his handkerchief, threw back his head; brushed the tears from his eyes, the blood from his face. The third wound was ghastliest of all. He was almost cut in two. It was pitiful that a man should be so hurt and should not die. They would have done anything for him: and raised him tenderly. But he had still his voice. "Let me be!" he said. "A French Admiral dies upon his quarter-deck."

Captain Casabianca,* like Napoleon a Corsican in the service

* His son, Mrs. Hemans's hero, was also serving on board. The famous poem, though untrustworthy in its details, presents a figure which may deservedly stand as typical of the steadfast heroism common to all defenders of the *Orient*.

of France, took command on the death of Brueys. The task of fighting the *Swiftsure* and *Alexander* was of itself sufficient. And now came a new enemy. The *Orient* caught fire. How it happened no one can say. There is a story that the flagship was being painted when the battle began and that the paint pots had been stowed upon the poop. But as a matter of fact it was common enough for a ship to catch fire. Why was not the fire put out? It was grim "Ben" Hallowell's doing. He isolated his enemy's poop with a ring of shot and shell. The Frenchmen could not approach it; or approaching were killed at once. The flames leapt up; and he guarded them like the heartless spirit of strife. The conflagration spread downward deck by deck. And still the men of the *Orient* stood by and manned their guns.

At ten, the flames reached the powder magazine: and the *Orient* blew up. The boom of the guns, the rattle of musketry, the shrieks of the victims, the groans of the dying, all were drowned in the volcanic burst, the elemental roar: and the dreadful blackness for the time was gone, swallowed up in the radiance of the blood-red light. Men looked with wonder in each other's faces; saw around them the havoc that the night had wrought, saw the decks with the dark stains upon them, saw ship beyond ship upon the battlefield, saw the land in the distance and the watching Arab throngs, and saw far off the wreckage dance on the heaving bosom of the bay. For minutes as it seemed all was visible: and then, as if Nature shuddered, the palpable darkness came down again and all was still, save where the ruddy spars fell to be quenched like torches, or a shower of sparks dropped hissing in the glassy surface of the sea.

All was still. The magnitude of the calamity put an instant period to the strife. Men did not then know as now they know that Napoleon's ill-gotten gains had perished with the ship: the spoils of Malta; £600,000, three tons of plate, the silver gates of the cathedral, the life-sized statues of the twelve apostles made of silver within and without. But they did know that the finest ship in the navy of France had been in an instant destroyed, and they did know that in the same instant of time 500 men, faithful and true, had been called to the great account. And so for a spell the battle was hushed while both sides honoured the dead.

As Captain Berry and officers watched from the *Vanguard's*

quarter-deck they were conscious of a presence among them, and turning beheld Nelson. In spite of his semi-blindness he had scrambled alone from the depths of the hold in time to witness the final catastrophe. He gave instant orders to lower away the boats and so rescued seventy men. It was with him a lasting regret that he could not rescue more.

. . . . . .

Brueys' *Franklin* renewed the fight. She was an eighty-gun ship and next ahead of the *Orient*. She was the only ship between Brueys' flag and the batteries on Aboukir Isle that had so far found no combatants. She was the only ship between Brueys' flag and Aboukir Isle that had not by now surrendered. The *Defence*, *Orion* and *Switfsure* pounced upon her: and the *Leander* raked her without pity.

The British were now at liberty to move along and deal with the French rear as efficaciously as they had dealt with the van. The reader may ask why the rear, instead of weighing anchor, stood like stupid sheep awaiting their doom. Had the battle been fought by daylight they would doubtless have made some effort, though the wind, it must be remembered, was blowing slap in their teeth and they had with suicidal foresight furled their sails. But as it was, the night covered all; and even when the *Orient* blew up they hardly realized the magnitude of the disaster that had overtaken their companions.

When the *Franklin* surrendered, the *Tonnant*, Brueys' second astern, constituted herself the protagonist of a new struggle, fighting with desperate gallantry. Dupetit Thouars, her captain, had his right arm maimed and his left arm mangled. Finally one of his legs was shattered. But he would not move or go below. He ordered a tub of bran to be brought, had himself placed in it; and with gorgeous fortitude conducted the fight while he slowly bled to death. One of his last commands was to nail the *Tonnant's* colours to the mast, and with his dying breath he exhorted his men never to surrender to the foe.

But no human pluck, no oaken planks, no broadsides could save the ships of France from the overwhelming force which Nelson's skill opposed to them.

About three o'clock in the morning the battle thunder suddenly lulled. It was not that the fight was over, not that the work was

complete. But the English seamen were exhausted. For nine hours of the night they had been toiling and struggling without refreshment, without relief. Now they dropped beside their guns, worn out. The noise of the firing could not keep them awake. They were surfeited with excitement.

. . . . . .

When morning dawned clear there were but three ships left of the gallant fleet that had brought Bonaparte to Egypt, the *Guillaume Tell*, the *Généreux* and the *Timoleon*. Hope died within them and they turned to fly. The *Timoleon* was rather too near the shoals. She ran aground, and was by her own company set afire. The other two showed a clean pair of heels. They were the only ships of the battle-line that escaped to tell the tale.

The news was received with frantic rapture in London and Moscow, Vienna and Naples, Calcutta and Constantinople. People's breath was taken away, and little wonder. The achievement was the completest ever wrought by the British Navy. Eighty-five per cent of the enemy's force taken, burnt, or destroyed! Britain might well rejoice. The victory restored to her the absolute sovereignty of the Mediterranean from Genoa to Tunis, from Gibraltar to Alexandretta.

Up till now France had prevailed against Europe. By the Nile her work was all undone. The dying embers of the continental struggle leapt into flames again. Austria and Russia made haste to form with Nelson's countrymen the "Second Coalition". Up till now all military reputation had paled before the star of Bonaparte. By the Nile the arch-strategist was cut off from his base. The noise of his deeds had filled the world. Now was he left with the silent Sphinx. India and Persia had beckoned to him. Now was his destiny spoiled. He might creep back to Europe alone: but the legions of the Orient were lost.

The Victory of the Nile raised Nelson to the highest pinnacle of human fame. Though but a young man and a junior flag-officer he was now regarded in England as the greatest seaman of his day, and in Europe as the greatest Englishman. Every one wanted to learn from his own lips how he had won a victory so miraculous and unprecedented: and he himself was eager to tell.

"I had the happiness," he modestly wrote, "to command a band of brothers."

Innumerable rewards and marks of esteem flowed in upon him. Lord Howe, Lord Hood, and Lord St. Vincent wrote him letters of congratulation. The "Band of Brothers" gave their leader a magnificent sword. The City of London voted £200 to buy him another. The East India Company made him a generous donation of £10,000. The Parliament of Great Britain granted him a pension of £2,000 a year. The Czar sent him a gold box inlaid with precious stones. The King of Sardinia conferred upon him the order of San Joachim. The King of Naples made him a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of San Ferdinand and presented him with a diamond-hilted sword. Most lavish of all were the gifts of the Sultan: the Order of the Crescent; a sable pelisse; a musket of silver and ivory; a gold-hilted blade in a sheath of gold; and the Chelingk, or Plume of Triumph, a gorgeous aigrette of 300 diamonds with central rose and thirteen sprays. Four of its gems alone were valued at £5,000: and with it came an autograph letter from the Sublime Porte informing Nelson that never before had the jewel been conferred on any but a Mussulman.

The King of England gave Nelson an honourable augmentation of his arms with the motto "Palmam qui meruit ferat". He gave him also permission to wear the Chelingk in his hat, and created him Baron Nelson of the Nile.*

A medal was struck in gold for Admirals and Captains, in silver for lieutenants, in bronze for the rest. On one side Hope leans on a medallion of Nelson; on the other the British attack the foe while the astonished sun sinks for once in the east. Some objection was raised to conferring it on Troubridge, but Nelson, ever loyal to his friends, insisted. "Captain Troubridge ASHORE," he said, "is superior to captains AFLOAT."

Berry was sent home with dispatches, and received a knighthood from the King: his place in the *Vanguard* was filled by Captain Hardy.

* Fearing that Nelson might be spoiled by the lavish presents he received, Captain "Ben" Hallowell sent him a coffin made from the timbers of the *Orient*. For once his irony went astray, for Nelson received the gift with humility and kept it in his cabin as a *memento mori*.

Two years * elapsed between the battle of the Nile and Nelson's return to England. These years were busy, but afforded little opportunity for martial exploits or increase of fame. Nelson's task was to garner the aftermath of his victory. He had to prevent the return of the French from Egypt. He had to blockade and capture Malta, the strategic base which they had taken from the Knights Hospitallers. And the kingdom of Naples daily endeavoured to fasten the burden of its cares upon his back.

Napoleon's campaign in Lombardy had carried the French sphere of influence in Italy to the Neapolitan borders. It threw a shadow over Naples itself. Nelson's victory seemed to lift the shadow and the monarchs took heart of grace and attempted by force to drive the French from the peninsula. But their troops proved worthless in the field and ran away. "They had not much honour to lose," said Nelson, "but they lost every scrap they had."

The position of affairs was reversed. Legions of *sans-culottes* poured across the frontier of Naples. Trees of liberty were planted, and under their shade outrages were committed that would have brought a blush to the face of slavery. The time-honoured kingdom was converted into the Parthenopeian, or as Nelson (with a truer sense of humour) termed it, the *Vesuvian* Republic: and the wretched King and Queen were threatened with the same fate that had overtaken Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Flight was the only remedy. That it did not end in disaster like the flight to Varennes was due to Nelson. He rescued the royal family, their household, their friends and their possessions. The true narrative reads like a page from a romance; the art treasures conveyed to the ships under the guise of wine-butts, the principal actors in the tragi-comedy attending a ball an hour before the escape; masks and dominoes, and a subterranean passage. In the multitudinous details of this exciting adventure Nelson was aided at every turn by Lady Hamilton, whose resourcefulness was only equalled by her pluck. When all were embarked, the ships stood across to Sicily; but they were caught by a howling tempest, the worst, Nelson said, in his remembrance. The closely-reefed topsails were blown out of the bolt-ropes. It seemed as if the royal family had escaped the perils of the land only to perish in the waters. The entire Court were prostrate with sea-sickness, and one of the

* September, 1798–July, 1800.

royal children died in the arms of Lady Hamilton. She alone made light of the roaring weather and acted as nurse to the whole party. Nelson brought his charges at last to Palermo.

The grateful monarchs reposed in him a childlike trust, and felt certain that he would in time re-establish their throne. Their faith was justified. Nelson could not of himself expel the French. But he bided his time until some part of their armies were withdrawn, and then he landed a select little band under Troubridge and, as he had done in Corsica, took their strongholds one by one.

During the exercise of his duty as High Commissioner for King Ferdinand he hanged a double-dyed traitorous villain called Caracciolo and this with a promptitude that Jarvie might have envied. Many writers have blamed him; partly from disappointment, because as a rule he was gentle and kind; partly from sentiment, because Caracciolo was a Prince and an Admiral; partly on the false supposition that Caracciolo was also an old man. The story of the grey hairs is a fable. Caracciolo was forty-seven. As for ranks and titles they could but add to his criminality when he served against the monarchs who ennobled him. The fact that Nelson was on all other occasions so tender-hearted should with fair-minded people deprive Caracciolo of the last claim upon their pity; for if on any ground he merited compassion, Nelson would have been the last man to deny it him.

In due time the throne was re-established and the King, to show his gratitude, conferred on Nelson a dukedom and (to maintain it) the estate of Bronte in Sicily, valued at £3,000 a year. Nelson was averse to taking so munificent an appanage, and only consented when he discovered that his refusal would wound the honour of Ferdinand. King George graciously consented to Nelson's acceptance of the foreign title, but the Admiral never flaunted it in the eyes of his countrymen. "Nelson and Bronte" he signed himself; but this was the only change.

Meanwhile the blockade of Malta continued. The ships alone could not enforce its surrender, though they could prevent its relief. Nelson set over the operations Captain Ball, whom like Troubridge he trusted as himself.* There were no regular troops, no

* On the surrender of the island Ball was knighted and became the first Governor. There is a delightful sketch of him in Marryat's *Midshipman Easy* where he figures as "Old Tom". Coleridge was for a time his secretary.

siege-train. There was little enough ammunition. Had Nelson been free from embarrassments in Sicily and Naples he would doubtless have found means to bring the blockade to an earlier close. In the spring of 1800 he appeared in person off Malta and the magic of his presence seemed at once to vitalize the dull monotony of the siege. Unconsciously timing their attempt almost for the hour of his arrival, the French tried to relieve the hungry garrison. Their corn-ships were attended by the *Généreux*, one of the two ships that had escaped from the Nile. Nelson's flag at this time was flying in the *Foudroyant*. He chased the *Généreux* and captured her with his own hands.

This is how he did it.*

When the chase was sighted all ships crowded canvas, but the *Northumberland* took the lead. Nelson turned to Berry.

"This will not do, Sir Ed'ard. It is certainly *Le Généreux*, and to my flag-ship alone she can surrender. Sir Ed'ard, we must and shall beat the *Northumberland*. Make the *Foudroyant* fly!"

"I will do the utmost, my lord. Get the engine to work on the sails. Hang butts of water to the stays. Pipe the hammocks down, and each man place shot in them. Slack the stays. Knock up the wedges and give the masts play. Start off the water, Mr. James, and pump the ship."

As the *Foudroyant* drew ahead, and at last took the lead, Nelson's agitation betrayed itself in the movements of the stump of his arm. "The Admiral is working his fin," whispered Berry to a junior. "Do not cross his hawse, I advise you." The advice was good, for at that moment Nelson opened furiously on the petty officer at the con.

"I'll knock you off your perch, you rascal, if you are so inattentive. Sir Ed'ard, send your best quarter-master to the weather-wheel."

"A strange sail ahead of the chase!" called the lookout man.

"Youngster, to the masthead. What! going without your glass, and be damned to you? Let me know what she is immediately."

"A sloop of war or frigate, my lord."

* The following account (with slight alterations) is from the *Reminiscences* of Lieutenant G. S. Parsons, who was serving at the time in the *Foudroyant*.

"Demand her number."

"The *Success*, my lord."

"Signal her to cut off the flying enemy. Great odds, though! Thirty-two small guns to eighty large ones."

"The *Success*, my lord, has hove to athwart-hawse of the *Généreux* and is firing her larboard broadside. The Frenchman has hoisted his tricolour with a Rear-Admiral's flag."

"Bravo! *Success*, at her again!"

"She has wore, my lord, and is firing her starboard broadside. . . . It has winged the chase, my lord. Her flying kites are flying away altogether."

The *Généreux* now opened fire on the frigate and every one stood aghast, fearing the consequence. But when the smoke cleared there was the *Success*, crippled it is true, but bulldog-like, bearing up after the enemy.

"Signal the *Success* to discontinue the action and come under my stern," said Nelson. "She had done well for her size. Try a shot from the lower deck at her, Sir Ed'ard."

"It goes over her."

"Beat to quarters and fire coolly and deliberately at her masts and yards."

At this moment a shot from the *Généreux* passed through the *Foudroyant's* mizen stay-sail, and Nelson patting one of the youngsters on the head asked him jocularly how he relished the music. Observing something like alarm depicted on his countenance he consoled him with the information that Charles XII ran away from the first shot he heard. "Therefore," he concluded, "I hope much from you in future."

Soon after this amid the thunder of the cannon the *Généreux's* tricolour came down.

Malta had nothing to hope for now, and General Vaubois, unable to hold out much longer, resolved to diminish the mouths that cried in vain for food by sending away as many as he could in a warship that lay in the harbour. This was the *Guillaume Tell*, the very last of the fatal thirteen that fought at Aboukir. Vaubois waited for a pitch-dark night and a favourable wind. Then he bade the ship fly, but within an hour she was sighted by the *Penelope* (Captain Blackwood) and the little frigate screamed with all her

guns for assistance. The *Foudroyant*, of course, was early on the scene, and to the *Foudroyant* the *Guillaume Tell* surrendered!

This auspicious occasion should have been one of the proudest moments in Nelson's life: for now to the very letter was fulfilled the injunction given to him by Lord St. Vincent "to take, burn, sink or destroy" the fleet that bore Napoleon to Egypt. But when the *Guillaume Tell* surrendered Nelson himself was not on board. He was lying sick ashore. Ever since the Nile his health had been wretched. He had had worries enough to kill the strongest. He had had no respite to recover from the racking fatigue occasioned by the search for Brueys' fleet. An occasional holiday was essential for one of his delicate physique, and his victory surely entitled him to it. But instead had come torturing after-effects from the wound in his head. Nelson never allowed himself to complain in a public dispatch and so was left in lingering pain when he should have been carried home to enjoy a triumph.*

And there was another trouble at this time that almost broke his heart. On the retirement of Lord St. Vincent the command of the Mediterranean was given to Lord Keith. Nelson was subordinated after his greatest achievement to one whose name to-day carries a sound of unfamiliarity. Not only was he persistently called aside from what he was doing to attend the behests of his superior; but he was reduced once more to the status he had occupied in the days of Hotham's *régime*. As Captain of the *Agamemnon* his feelings had nearly choked him. What then must he have felt with the laurels of the Nile about his brow when he was hurried about from pillar to post as if he had been commander of a gun-brig?

In July, 1800, he received leave of absence and started for home. He may have felt sorry to withdraw before Malta surrendered (5th September), but it did not really matter, as in no case would he have had the credit. Lord Keith would not spare him a battleship to return, so that he travelled overland through Vienna, Prague, Dresden and Hamburg. His progress through France-

* There is a portrait of Nelson painted in *Foudroyant* days by a Neapolitan artist called Guzzardi. Anybody familiar with the pictures of the Admiral by Abbott, Beechy, and Hoppner would stare in amazement at this. The whole face is drawn with pain and misery and suffering.

hating Germany was one prolonged gala. He received the homage of all ranks from princes to peasants. In one place an inn-keeper raked in a small fortune by allowing the curious to climb up a ladder and see the great Lord Nelson at his dinner. When he landed at Yarmouth in November, 1800, he found that the lapse of two years had done nothing to diminish the public interest in his victory. The adoring crowds shouted themselves hoarse at his appearance and put themselves between the shafts whenever he went for a drive. Their adulation set the good blood coursing through his veins again. He forgot about his head. He forgot all about Lord Keith. Before he left Yarmouth he offered his services with all the enthusiasm of old days. "First-rate or sloop of war," he wrote, "is a matter of perfect indifference!"

THE BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN,
OR
THE BATTLE OF THE BALTIC

APRIL 2, 1801

O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile.

—TENNYSON.

It was something more than a coincidence which brought Nelson home from the Mediterranean at the end of 1800, for the menace to Great Britain was no longer from the South. It had sprung up in a new form nearer home.

Bonaparte was once more in France. Unable to rescue his army from the predicament into which Nelson's victory had thrown it, he had crawled home undetected in a little ship, overthrown the Government, established himself as First Consul, undone at Marengo all that Austria had achieved during his absence, and turned once more with zest to the problem of humiliating England. With this end he played upon the feelings of Paul I, the half-witted Czar of Russia. Paul was Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, and Bonaparte, unable to keep Malta for himself, bequeathed it to what he termed its rightful suzerain. The Czar demanded Britain's evacuation of the island, and meeting refusal, turned to Bonaparte for advice. Bonaparte urged the revival of the Armed

Neutrality, which during the crisis of the American War had added so materially to England's difficulties. Sweden and Denmark,* with grievances of a more material kind, were ready to join. For so long as Britain decided for herself what contraband comprised and overhauled all neutral ships in search of it, they were unable to make anything out of the war: and were gravely hindered in the pursuance of their ordinary trade relations.

As Britain depended on the Baltic for oak and cordage and canvas, the Armed Neutrality, backed as it was by Bonaparte, constituted a grave peril, which she could not overlook. She cherished the hope that her difficulties with the northern Powers might still be peaceably adjusted, but resolved during the negotiations to assume an attitude of iron firmness.

It was this mixed feeling that induced her to adopt a course of action which to-day seems so preposterous, so misguided and inane; the choice of Sir Hyde Parker as Commander-in-Chief, the delegation of Lord Nelson to the second place. Sir Hyde was sent in case the Baltic Powers should prove tractable; Nelson that the blow might be forcible if a blow were delivered at all. Ministers made sure that wholesale destruction would overtake somebody if Nelson was in supreme power; and this was really a compliment though perforce a veiled one. Peace, however, was uppermost in their minds and rightly so. Where they were unforgivably wrong was in supposing that Sir Hyde would prove superior to his junior in any capacity whatsoever. Unfortunately it was not until the conclusion of the campaign that they discovered in Nelson those qualities of tact, humanity and political insight which they might have taken for granted from the first if they had reposed in him at the outset the trust he so fully deserved.

Of Sir Hyde Parker there is not very much to be said. He was the son of "Vinegar" Parker, Rodney's Admiral, from whom he inherited the family baronetcy. Nelson had already served with him, for Sir Hyde had been chief of staff to Hood at Toulon and held an *interim* command in the Mediterranean between the tenures of Hotham and Jervis. He was a wealthy man and desired to signalize his appointment to high command by giving a ball at Yarmouth before he started. But the Admiralty got wind of his intention and bundled him off rather brusquely. His flag

* Norway at this time belonged to Sweden.

flew in the *London* and Nelson's in the *St. George.* Nelson took Hardy as his captain.

Parker was anything but pleased at his association with the Victor of the Nile: in fact he was quite inclined to be huffy, and to deny his second all intimacy, all share in his thoughts and plans. Nelson could not allow this soreness to continue one day longer than was necessary. He knew that Sir Hyde was something of a gourmet and would relish a delicacy all the more when they had just left the good things behind: and so as they crossed the Dogger Bank he set his men to fish for turbot. No other fish would do and at last a fine one was hooked. Nelson sent it to his Commander-in-Chief with a message of kindly goodwill: and in this strange way their quarrel was ended before it had well begun.

The Baltic navies were designed for commerce-protection and the patrol of shoaly seas. They were largely made up of the lower rates. Yet there was no lack of battleships. Russia had twenty ready to fight, Sweden had eleven and Denmark ten. The union of all into one grand fleet would present a truly formidable combination, and Parker, with a force of less than half, hoped against hope in his inmost soul that the allies would not provoke him to chastise them.

Arriving at the southern end of the Cattegat he halted three days for the return of an ambassador who had preceded the fleet to Copenhagen in a fast-sailing frigate. Nelson was furious at the delay. "I hate your pen-and-ink men," he said. "A fleet of British ships of war are the best negotiators in Europe."

On 23rd March the ambassador joined them. He was crest-fallen. The Danes were intractable. They were fortifying their capital; making it, if he knew anything, impenetrably strong. A Council of War was summoned. Parker set his views before it. Here at the end of the Cattegat they occupied the position which correct strategy prescribed. No battle-fleet could emerge from the Baltic without their knowledge, or pass them without giving battle. They controlled every movement of the "Armed Neutrality," which they could certainly never do if they were rash enough to enter the Baltic and ramble about from place to place. Parker's arguments were specious. They met with some support. But Nelson hacked them to pieces. They had come on a definite

mission. That mission was to break up the "Armed Neutrality". They had tested the efficacy of pacific measures. Pacific measures had failed. The time had come to strike. Was it consonant with Britain's dignity to sit submissively at the entrance to the Baltic like one afraid to intrude? Let them enter at once and reiterate their demands with the power of the fleet behind them.

Parker yielded and Nelson continued his argument. Their wisest course, as it appeared to him, was to push on at once to the Gulf of Finland and deal with Russia. Russia was at the head of the confederacy, and if she were forced to retire from it, the whole coalition would come down like a house of cards. After events proved the correctness of his judgment in this as in everything else. But Parker joined issue with him here. They had direct evidence from the ambassador that the Danes were arming. It would be bad generalship to pass by Copenhagen leaving an undefeated enemy in their rear. In vain Nelson pleaded that it would be sufficient to leave a squadron of observation, and push on with the pick of the fleet. Parker on this point was stubborn.

It was therefore determined without delay to make an attack on Denmark.

There are three waterways joining the Cattegat and the Baltic; the Sound, the Great Belt and the Little Belt. Of these the last named was quite impossible. There were therefore two alternative routes. Of these the Great Belt was the more difficult. It was made perilous with bars and shoals and banks. It was to all intents uncharted. The main waterway was the Sound. It was the principal channel of the Baltic trade. It offered an easy passage whose course if tortuous was well-known. But then, as the highway to Copenhagen, it was strongly fortified. The mouth of the Strait but a mile or two in width was commanded on the Danish side by Kronborg Castle and the defences of Elsinore, and on the Swedish side by the city of Helsingborg.

Parker was in favour of engaging the castles in conversation and slipping through the Sound. Nelson was in favour of the Belt. Even at this early hour he had worked out in his own brain the essential principle, that in the end proved Denmark's undoing. Copenhagen must be attacked from the south! To assault Copenhagen from the north, to engage in succession all the de-

fences with which the Danes guarded their natural approach, was to take the bull by the horns. Let them navigate the Belt and, doubling back, come upon their enemy unawares; for in so doing

DENMARK AND THE ENTRANCES TO THE BALTIC

they would gain a double advantage. They would sever the Danes from their friends: and while they attacked Copenhagen with one half of their fleet they could with the other effectively prevent the approach of Russians and Swedes. And what was still

more to the point: the fair wind that enabled them to deliver their assault (blowing as it did from the south) would enable them also, when the battle was over, to make sail in the direction they desired, instead of being carried against their will into the heart of a hostile sea. All this and more Nelson set before Parker in a letter which he composed at the conclusion of the Council of War. It was a convincing note with "The boldest methods are the safest" for its text; famous words that have passed into a proverb.

On the 26th they entered the Belt and cautiously began to feel their way through its mazy windings. But Sir Hyde would not tolerate the burden of anxiety. Hardly was he in than he was out again, and prepared to consider the whole problem afresh. Nelson's patience was almost exhausted. "Go by the Sound or by the Belt or anyhow," he said. "Only lose not an hour!" Lose not an hour! For three days there were head winds or dead calms and the fleet remained stationary. Ten days in all had passed and nothing done: ten days for the Danes to perfect their defence.

Sir Hyde now opened negotiations with the Governor of Kronborg Castle. If the British stood through the strait, he asked, would the Governor take steps to stop them? The Governor very naturally replied that he would. His nuncio, having occasion to write, picked up in the *London's* cabin a stubby quill-pen. "If your guns are not better pointed than your pens," he said, "you will make little impression on Copenhagen." Sir Hyde's dilatoriness almost justified such insolence. The same messenger learned with astonishment that Nelson made one of the fleet.

On 30th March they entered the Sound, Nelson's division in the van. The Governor of Kronborg opened fire. But his shots dropped short; and as the Swedes did nothing to second his endeavours, Parker and Nelson steered a course somewhat nearer to the eastern bank and so escaped without injury. About midday they dropped anchor under the lee of Huen Island: and in the afternoon set out in a lugger to inspect the preparations of the Danes.

Copenhagen is situated partly on the large island of Zealand, partly on the small island of Amag. The Channel between the two forms what is called "The Harbour". On one side of it in 1801 frowned the guns of the Citadel: on the other were the Trekroner or Three Crown* batteries perched on two artificial

* Norway, Sweden and Denmark were at one time united.

islands piled up in the midst of the flood. These mounted between them some seventy guns and constituted therefore the very teeth of the defence for "it was a saying at this time that three guns in a fort were a match for a three-decker afloat". To complete the defences of the Harbour four or five large vessels had been warped into its mouth. But the depth of water would not accommodate a seventy-four, so that the warships had to take their chance in the roadstead. Here they were skilfully drawn up on the five-fathom contour in a line extending almost due south. Their rear was securely guarded by the flats: their left wing was as securely guarded by the unanswerable ordnance of the Trekroner. As they were anchored in line ahead their broadsides presented an unbroken mile of fire. There were eighteen ships in all; third-rates, fourth-rates; East Indiamen; transports specially pierced for the occasion; frigates and sloops. One or two of them were fully-rigged, but the majority had their masts sawn off flush with the deck. There was to be no manœuvring: sheer fighting only. The vessels were just so many gun-platforms: call them temporary water-forts or floating-batteries. They enjoyed every advantage that Brueys enjoyed at the Nile with this significant addition that their position could NOT be turned. It was not only excellently chosen for their own protection but for the protection also of the city behind them, where their line of fire was reduplicated by the batteries of Amag Island.

When the *Lark* returned from her reconnaissance a new Council of War was instantly summoned. All were depressed. It was evident that Parker thought that nothing could be done. Many present agreed with him. The thing was clean impossible. Nelson was furious, and spoke with heat. "As the thing is necessary to be done," he said, "the more difficulties the more necessary to try to remove them." And when others, disguising their nervousness under a cloak of foresight, hinted at the probable approach of the Swedes and the numerical strength of the Russians he answered contemptuously: "The more numerous the better. I wish they were twice as many. The easier the victory, depend on it!" Finding the majority of the Council against him, he offered with half of the fleet to demolish the defences of Denmark.

Parker accepted the offer with both hands; gave him ten of the line, two fifties and all the frigates and sloops.

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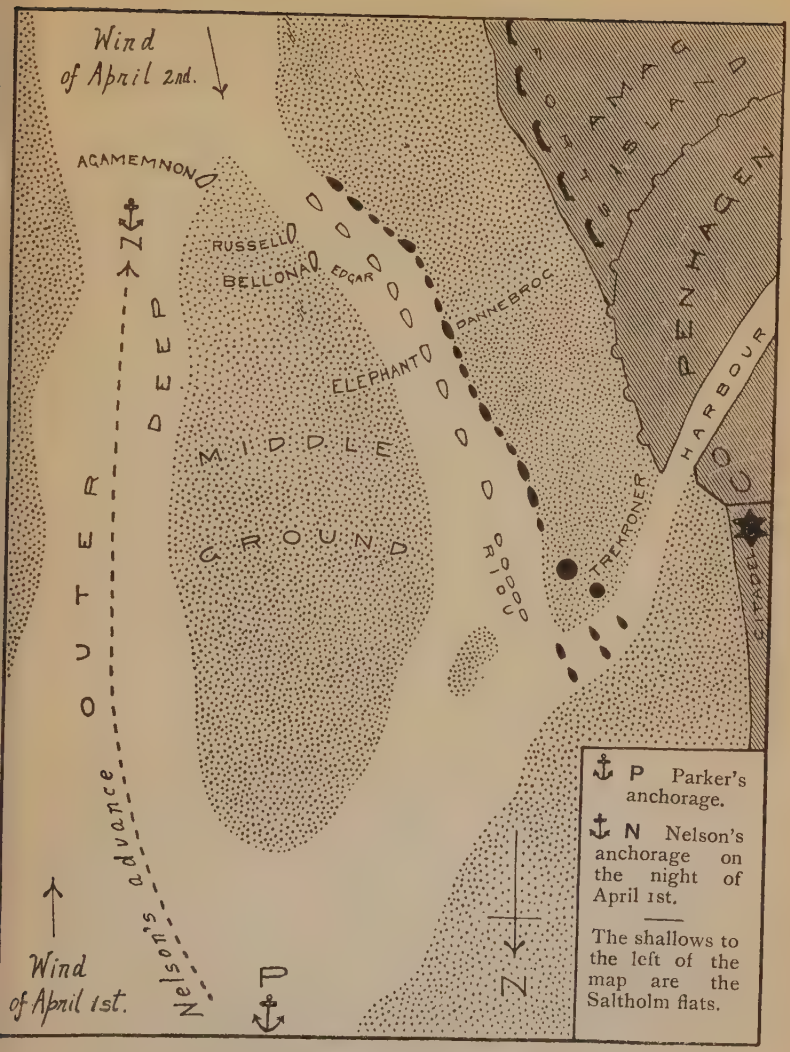
If the Three Crown batteries and mile of ships were the sword and spear of Copenhagen, then the shallows formed her shield and buckler. Immediately opposite the town lay the Island of Saltholm, whose banks constricted the Channel between it and Amag to a bare two miles and a half. And right in the fairway lay the Middle Ground, bifurcating the passage; King's Deep on its western side and Outer Deep on its eastern. At the city margin of the King's Deep were the eighteen ships that Nelson intended to smite. How was he to reach them? The obvious plan was to proceed by way of the Trekroner skirting the northern end of the Middle Ground, and massing on the Danish left. This was the approach which the Danes made sure the Britons would utilize. But because they were ready to receive him here Nelson resolved to attack their right. To do so a clue was needed that would lead him through the labyrinth of shoals; for no one knew the boundaries of the Middle Ground, and all the buoys had by the Danes been carefully removed.

Nelson set to work with a will to chart the sands. In person he superintended every detail; bringing to his task all the experience he had accumulated, from the days when as a boy he had explored the lower reaches of the Thames to that supreme hour among the banks of Aboukir. That the Danes might not suspect anything the sounding was done at night. The moment darkness fell on the 31st the boats were out and till earliest dawn they laboured, defining the limits of the Outer Deep.

On the morning of 1st April the whole fleet dropped down from Huen Isle to the north of the Middle Ground. In the afternoon the chosen band left their comrades and with a northerly breeze prepared to enter the perilous confines they had buoyed. They were piloted by the *Amazon* frigate, Captain Riou, whose "gallant and good" qualities Nelson quickly recognized. The *St. George* was too large for the Admiral's purpose and he shifted his flag to Foley's ship, the *Elephant*. But he would not be separated from Hardy, who left the *St. George* and accompanied him as volunteer. The Outer Deep in places was only 500 yards wide, but it was navigated with complete success and the twelve dropped anchor at its southern end. "The moment I have a fair wind, I shall fight," said Nelson, and he signalled to prepare for action.

That night he gave a dinner-party on board the *Elephant*.



THE BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN
April 2, 1801

Hardy was there and Foley, Colonel Stewart commanding the soldiery, Riou and others. Nelson was in high spirits, as indeed he invariably was when a battle was certain. He drank to a leading wind. His enthusiasm infected the rest. They forgot that they had accepted risks graver than any accepted before. They thought only of the happiness of fighting under one who never failed. At an early hour they departed knowing their leader must be almost exhausted; for he had never turned in at all the night before. Nelson detained Hardy, Foley and Riou. There was still much to be done; and with Foley and Riou he drew up his plan of attack. He was so tired that they persuaded him to lie in his cot: and from there he conducted the discussion and afterwards dictated the necessary orders. Sleep was impossible: and when all was done, he lay awake shouting injunctions to his secretaries to make haste and finish, for every hour they brought him news of the wind and the news was favourable. The wind was going round to the south and would carry him into battle: into battle, and out when it was over, just as he had explained to Sir Hyde Parker days and days before.

Meanwhile the devoted Hardy was out with the boats. He found the southern limits of the Middle Ground and the trend of its curve to the northward. Then he crossed the "King's Deep" and reckoned the fathoms under the very sides of the Danish ships; sounding his way with the help of a pole lest the noise of the lead should disturb the enemy.

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When the glorious 2nd of April dawned Nelson was early astir. He breakfasted: and as soon as it was light summoned all captains to his side. He gave them their instructions and explained everything fully. As he had only twelve ships to the Danish eighteen and as the Trekroner required at least two, he was obliged to make very careful dispositions, so that his own small force might press as heavily as possible on the vital points of the enemy's line. The ships were to go into action in the manner first used by Hawke, every vessel passing on the disengaged side of those already at work and taking up her own position immediately ahead. This scheme was first utilized against an enemy in full retreat. The fact that the Danes were at anchor suggested to Nelson an improvement. He arranged that the leader of his own force

should drop anchor alongside not "Number One" but "Number Five" in the Danish array, so that the tip of their right wing might be crushed by numbers defiling past. The ships that eventually anchored here would find their work half done, and on its completion would act as a reserve force and move to the assistance of those ahead.

At 9.30 Nelson signalled to weigh and for a time the fortune of battle lay in the hands of the pilots. These were for the most part mates of merchantmen employed in the Baltic trade. They were accustomed to threading the King's Deep, but in vessels much smaller and handier than a third-rate of the line. They were not only unaccustomed to battleships: they were unaccustomed to work under fire. Their only thought, said Nelson, was to keep their silly heads clear of shot. If they fumbled, there was this for excuse. The King's Deep was narrower than the Outer Deep, especially at its entrance.

But one ship did not weather the Middle Ground: and this of all others, Nelson's well-loved *Agamemnon*. She ran on the east of the shoal and there stuck fast. The *Edgar* ahead of her had in consequence to bear the whole brunt for a time alone, anchoring in the place assigned to her, opposite enemy "Number Five". Two other Britons made haste to succour her and anchored without mishap. But then came more casualties. The *Bellona* took the ground and then the *Russell;* both of them seventy-fours; a grievous loss.

One quarter of the British force was out of action and the battle hardly begun!

Nelson, seventh in the line, came next astern. It was a critical moment: for the *Bellona* and *Russell*, eager to rectify their mistake, did not at once hoist signals of distress; and the *Elephant's* course lay between them and the bank on which they were stuck! Nelson supposed that they had anchored, and disapproving of their position signalled to them to close. As the flags went up he divined what was wrong; and with lightning decision starboarded his helm. The *Elephant* swung into mid channel and so far as it was possible the situation was saved: for with one accord the remaining ships followed the Master-Pilot.

Nelson anchored alongside the *Dannebrog*, flag-ship of Commodore Fischer. He had designed for himself the *Zealand*, a larger

vessel which lay nearer to the island batteries: but the loss of three sail disarranged his line. It dangerously weakened too the northern half. There were but three ships left to fight ahead of him, and eight or nine Danes to be destroyed. Under the circumstances no battleships could be spared for the Trekroner forts. Nelson, however, had grouped all the frigates and sloops as a reserve force under Riou with instructions to act as the exigencies of the fight required. Riou therefore threw himself into the gap, and with his flotilla strengthened the British right. It was the warmest corner of the battlefield, but he liked it none the less for that.

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The battle-thunder rolled from one end of the line to the other.

> Each gun
> From its adamantine lips
> Spread a death-shade round the ships
> Like the hurricane eclipse
> Of the sun.

Weapon for weapon, man for man, and ship for ship the Danes were not the equals of the Britons. But they were called upon for gunnery alone and as gunners they did their duty valiantly. For long they had been practising ashore and afloat, and the ranks of the seamen were recruited from the army, from the universities, from every grade of society. They fought with that doggedness which recognizes no defeat. They tugged at their guns amid mounds of slain: and when some gallant officer fell at his post another as gallant would row from the land with a boat-load of volunteers. The hours crept slowly by. Eleven! Twelve! One!

> Again! Again! Again!
> And the havoc did not slack,
> Till a feeble cheer the Dane
> To our cheering sent us back;—
> Their shots along the deep slowly boom.

The roar of the artillery was music to Nelson; but Sir Hyde Parker heard it with dismay. He had done his best to send two or three of his fleet to Nelson's assistance, but wind and tide were against them. He watched and waited, wondering what he ought to do. He did not know that Riou's squadron had been

practically cut to pieces. He did not know that the *Monarch* at the northern end of the field was almost overpowered, had suffered indeed more casualties than any other British ship throughout the war. But he guessed it. He surveyed the scene, saw the signals of distress flying from three of his own side and heard the Danish broadsides thundering as for three hours they had thundered. He had maintained from the first that the thing was impossible. Events, he feared, were proving him right. After due consideration he made up his mind: and at one o'clock the signal was thrown out on board the *London* for the action to cease. His decision was kindly meant. He intended simply to provide Nelson with a means of escape; if (as he guessed) the crisis was come and was proving insupportable. The crisis had come. In that he was right. Sooner or later, perhaps in a moment one side or the other must relax its grip. A little thing at such a time will turn the scale: and if Parker's signal had communicated to the thrice-tried warriors his own hesitation and doubt it might well have led to the gravest catastrophe in the annals of the fleet; for the only retreat lay through the jaws of death, under the Trekroner batteries.

"Lord Nelson," writes Colonel Stewart, "was at this time, as he had been during the whole action, walking the starboard side of the quarter-deck; sometimes much animated, and at others heroically fine in his observations. A shot through the main-mast knocked a few splinters about us. He observed to me with a smile: 'It is warm work and this day may be the last to any of us at any moment,' and then stopping short at the gangway, he used an expression never to be erased from my memory and said with emotion, 'but mark you, I would not be elsewhere for thousands'. When the signal, No. 39, was made, the signal lieutenant reported it to him. He continued his walk, and did not appear to take notice of it. The lieutenant meeting his lordship at the next turn asked whether he should repeat it. Lord Nelson answered, 'No; acknowledge it!' On the officer returning to the poop, his lordship called after him, 'Is No. 16 still hoisted?'" This was his favourite signal, the signal for closer action. "The lieutenant answering in the affirmative, Lord Nelson said, 'Mind you keep it so!' He now walked the deck considerably agitated . . . moving the stump of his right arm. After a turn or two, he said to me in

a quick manner, 'Do you know what's shown on board of the Commander-in-Chief?—No. 39!' On asking him what that meant, he answered, 'Why, to leave off action'. 'Leave off action!' he repeated, and then added with a shrug, 'Now, damn me if I do'. He also observed to Captain Foley, 'You know, Foley, I have only one eye. I have a right to be blind sometimes.' And then with an archness peculiar to his character, putting the glass to his blind eye, he exclaimed, 'I really do not see the signal!'"

"The squadron of frigates obeyed the signal and hauled off. . . . Captain Riou was killed by a raking shot when the *Amazon* showed her stern to the Trekroner. He was sitting on a gun, was encouraging his men, and had been wounded in the head by a splinter. He had expressed himself grieved at being thus obliged to retreat, and nobly observed, 'What will Nelson think of us?' His clerk was killed at his side; and by another shot several of the marines, while hauling on the mainbrace, shared the same fate. Riou then exclaimed, 'Come then, my boys, let us all die together!' The words were scarcely uttered when the fatal shot severed him in two."

If the frigates had stayed any longer they must certainly have been blown to pieces. But not a single ship of the line budged from her place.

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The struggle endured for another hour. But towards two the Danish fire slackened and in several ships ceased altogether. The enemy had fought with dauntless valour: but the British perseverance wore them out. It remained for Nelson to take possession of his prizes as fast as the flags came down.

But now a new and unexpected difficulty arose. As Nelson's boats rowed across to take possession, the Danes opened fire on them. This was entirely contrary to the usage and procedure of war; and yet it cannot have been prompted by any desire to curtail suffering or gain an unfair advantage. Witness the *Dannebrog*. The *Dannebrog* lost 270 men out of 336. Then a fire broke out in her and Commodore Fischer hauled down his flag and rehoisted it elsewhere. Nelson sent a boarding-party to the *Dannebrog*, and the *Dannebrog* reopened fire. Nelson returned the compliment and in a short time the Dane with cables severed was drifting before

the wind, one sheet of living flame; with all her dead and wounded on board and the survivors leaping madly through the portholes. It may have been that the reinforcements who ferried across from the Amag batteries did not stop to inquire on coming aboard what stage the conflict had reached. It may have been that among so many who were not of the sea-service there was an ignorance of the customs governing such matters.

In any case Nelson was put in an extremely awkward predicament. He did not intend that the prizes should escape and yet he was powerless to remove them in the ordinary way. There seemed but a single alternative; to send down fireships on the conquered foe and set their whole line aflame. The very thought was repugnant to him. His admiration had been roused by the pluck of his enemies and towards them he felt none of the ineradicable hatred that he cherished for Jacobin France. He rather resolved to call for a truce and save the ships and their wounded as well. There was an objection to this; for he who in the midst of battle first cries, "Halt! enough," either appears to confess himself defeated or to resort to an unworthy *ruse de guerre*. The enemy in the one case adopts an air of magnanimity and in the other wears a look of suspicion. How was Nelson to convince the foe of his sincerity and—superiority?

Without leaving the deck he wrote them a letter leaning on the casing of the rudder head.

To the Brothers of Englishmen, the Brave Danes.

Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson has been commanded to spare Denmark when she no longer resists. The line of defence which covered her shores has struck to the British flag. Let the firing cease, then, that he may take possession of his prizes, or he will blow them into the air along with their crews who have so nobly defended them. The brave Danes are the brothers and should never be the enemies of the English.

The letter finished: next to fasten it. They offered him a wafer. He refused it. There must be no sign of haste: rather some mark of deliberateness here in the turmoil of battle. He sent for a candle and sealing-wax. The man who went below for a candle was killed on the way. Nelson sighed and sent another. Then he made a careful impression with his largest seal: and under flag of truce sent the letter ashore with every circumstance of formality.

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The mission was successful beyond his hopes. The Danes had lost on the lowest reckoning two men at least to every one of his.* Some have set their losses at 7,000. The Crown Prince was unable to withstand the general desire that the wounded should be rescued. So he agreed to a twenty-four hours' armistice. Nelson lost not a minute in gathering up his prizes. Of the eighteen Danes that had fought so well, three and three only escaped. One of them lay under the very shadow of the island batteries and the other two were but tiny things that skimmed away over the shallows. All the rest were taken or sunk.

Thus the Navy of Denmark ceased to exist.

When he came to move his ships out of the King's Deep Nelson found that the armistice had its own particular blessing for himself. Had he consumed the Danish fleet in one great holocaust, he would still have been obliged to fight his way out past the Trekroner. He was prepared to do so, when he had dealt with the ships. But because his business lay with the ships and because that business was finished, there was nothing to be gained by battering masonry, work for which his floating force was unsuited. As a matter of fact, when he ran past the forts the *Elephant* and two others took the ground. Under less favourable circumstances they might conceivably have been blown to bits. With the Trekroner dumb they were in good time removed, and even the *Bellona* and *Russell* were retrieved without further mishap.

The Navy of Denmark being numbered among things of the past, Nelson would have proceeded at once to demolish Sweden and Russia. But Sir Hyde was adamant. Reasserting his authority he declared that nothing would induce him to penetrate farther into the Baltic while Denmark remained in arms. He gave Nelson his kind permission to induce Denmark to forego her hostility. But that was all. So Nelson became an ambassador.

With the faithful Hardy as his *aide-de-camp* and with a bodyguard for his protection, he went ashore under a flag of truce. The Danes were a prey to mingled feelings at the sight of him. Because he had destroyed their navy they longed to tear him in pieces; because he had "given their wounds repose," they were grateful; because so fearlessly he ventured his person among them they ad-

* Nelson lost 900, killed and wounded.

mired while they hated him. Unconscious of the stir he was creating Nelson passed into the presence of the Crown Prince. There was in his address the courtly dignity, in his manner the suave graciousness of the perfect diplomat. By graceful compliment he gained a sympathetic audience. "The French," he said, "fought bravely; but they could not have stood for one hour the fight which the Danes supported for four." Then he proposed his demands. He asked that his ships might have the freedom of all Danish ports: and that Denmark for a period of four months should abandon the Armed Neutrality. To the latter demand the Crown Prince took instant exception: to play Russia false was not consonant with the honour of his country. No care need be taken for the Russians, said Nelson, for in the four months he intended to destroy them. This was diplomacy of an abrupt sort; but the Danes, as Nelson guessed, were bound to Russia by ties, not of friendship, but of fear. While they looked about for new arguments, one of their number, in an unwise moment, spoke of renewing hostilities. This gave Nelson the chance of playing his only trump, and he flung it on the table. "Renew hostilities!" he said. "We are ready at a moment; ready to bombard this very night." "Though I have only one eye," he whispered to Hardy, "I can see all this will burn very well."

In the end he whittled down his demand from four months to fourteen weeks: but this was immaterial. He gained everything he wanted. He advanced his own base 500 miles. He securely guarded his communications. He fettered the hands of Denmark, released his own, and satisfied his Commander-in-Chief.

Sir Hyde before proceeding farther burned all but one of Nelson's prizes. He would not spare a battleship to take them home and could hardly carry them about with him. This done, he pushed into the Baltic through the channel that Nelson had buoyed. Nelson's ship, the *St. George*, was of too heavy a draught. Parker therefore left his second behind! Nelson unshipped his guns, put them on board a merchantman, coaxed the *St. George* through the shallows, reshipped the guns and sped after his graceless commander. Then, just as he heard that the Swedes were out, a head-wind held him back. The news came at eventide: but he did not even stop to take a cloak. He flung himself into a

boat and rowed to Parker's first rendezvous, twenty-five miles away. The night wind chilled him to the bone: but he declared his intention of rowing on to the second rendezvous if the fleet had left the first. And the second was at the very least one hundred and fifty miles.

The fleet had not yet sailed: but the Swedes were disinclined to fight. They had learned wisdom from the battle of the Baltic. Nor yet was there any struggle with Russia: and this although Parker was recalled and Nelson made commander-in-chief. The crazy, truculent, fire-eating Czar was in the thick of the crisis murdered: and Nelson on reaching Russia found a successor whose peaceful inclinations wrecked the confederacy and led to a general adjustment of difficulties. Herein were Nelson's words justified when at Elsinore he said that Russia was a tree and the other Baltic Powers but branches.

One who frequented Nelson's table wrote of him at his death: "I never heard him voluntarily refer to any of the great actions of his life". It is, however, well known that he considered Copenhagen his masterpiece. Captain Mahan describes it as "the most difficult, the most hazardous, and at the moment the most critically important of his victories". This opinion strangely enough was not shared by his employers. The King indeed raised the victor himself one step in the peerage.* But this was all. Nelson was indignant, not for himself, but for his officers and men. He himself was always so open-handed. When the East India Company gave him £10,000 he distributed £2,000 among his brothers and sisters. When the King of Naples gave him the Bronte estate he saddled it with an annual charge of £500 for his father. No feat of gallantry or skill seen by him ever went without its meed of praise. That was why the sailors loved him. They loved him the more now when he publicly rebuked the authorities for so callously ignoring their claims. "If Lord Nelson could forget the services of those who have fought

* If this were meant as the measure of Nelson's achievement it was ridiculously inadequate. A viscounty was the least that could have been offered (apart from the battle) for his work as an ambassador. If the Government felt a little nervous lest their stock of rewards should be exhausted before Nelson's capacity for winning victories, then there is something to be said for them!

under his command," ran his letter to the Lord Mayor, "he would ill deserve to be supported as he always has been."

In vain. He could induce Denmark to do what he willed. He could even galvanize a Parker into action. But he could not induce his countrymen to give his gallant lads a copper medal.

Splinters were flying above, below,
When Nelson sailed the Sound:
"Mark you, I wouldn't be elsewhere now,"
Said he, "for a thousand pound!"
The Admiral's signal bade him fly,
But he wickedly wagged his head,
He clapped the glass to his sightless eye
And "I'm damned if I see it," he said. —NEWBOLT.

THE TRAFALGAR CAMPAIGN. 1803-1805

CHAPTER I. THE BLOCKADE OF TOULON

I do not say that the French cannot come. I only say they cannot come by sea.—EARL ST. VINCENT.

Not many months after Copenhagen, negotiations were entered into, and in the spring of 1802 the war of the French Revolution was concluded by the Peace of Amiens. Glad to be released, Nelson spent the happiest twelvemonth of his life at Merton, an estate which he had purchased, on the road from London to Portsmouth. Never before had he had a house entirely his own. He was immensely pleased by the feeling of proprietorship; loved sitting in the high-backed pew on a Sunday; and did good by stealth among his poorer neighbours.

But Amiens was really no more than a truce. Britain had proved herself invincible upon the sea and France upon the land. Napoleon desired an interval in which to establish his despotism and prepare a new scheme to destroy the "nation of shopkeepers" who thwarted him. Britain desired peace but could not disguise her suspicion of his motives. With magnificent insolence he feigned surprise at this, and attempted to browbeat her Ministers. He rode rough-shod over his own promises and at the same time demanded the instant evacuation of Malta, their only pledge for his good behaviour. This was too much; and in May, 1803, they surprised him with a declaration of war. The First Consul was not ready. He had not yet assumed the Imperial Crown. He had not yet completely compassed his plan for their destruction.

England gave her principal sea commands to Nelson and Cornwallis. The latter, who had made such a name in the American War, had been badly served by fortune in the war just brought to a close. After service in India he had returned to the Channel just as Jervis and Nelson were making the Mediterranean the station for honour. On one occasion, however, with five ships only he had met the entire French fleet. He engaged their vanguard with his flag-ship, while the rest of his force drew away, and in the end brought all into safety by sending ahead the *Phaethon* frigate to signal in an open code the approach of the Channel Fleet. No one afloat ever scored off "Billy Blue"; and a safer man to hold the Brest command could not have been discovered in the Navy List.

Nelson at last received the command which he had desired so long; which had been denied him so often, the scene of his triumphant exploits, the Mediterranean. And for his flag the *Victory* was named, the *Victory* that still floats in Portsmouth harbour. She was an historic ship in 1803, and in every way worthy to carry her master. She had served as flagship to Keppel at the battle of Ushant, to Howe at the relief of Gibraltar, to Hood at Toulon, and to Jervis at the battle of St. Vincent.*

Since her last appearance she had been practically rebuilt and was considered the smartest first-rate in the service.

Nelson could not conceal his eagerness to be gone. "I cannot sail before to-morrow and that's an age," he cried. In the end he left the *Victory* to follow and scurried off to his station in a frigate. He arrived in July, 1803, and opened what was to prove by far the most memorable blockade ever maintained by wooden walls. Hours turned into days, days into weeks, weeks into months and months into years: and still the great leader mounted guard, giving in this a new exhibition of his many-sidedness; for the watch he kept over Toulon required virtues very different from the fiery impatience which had hurled destruction on Spaniard, Frenchman, and Dane. He had, it must be understood, no dockyard behind him, no place for occasional repose, no base of

* The resolution to build her was arrived at in the year of Nelson's birth. Laid down at Chatham in the "Year of Victories" she took six years to build and was launched in 1765. She displaced 3400 tons, mounted 104 guns, and in a fair breeze could sail ten knots an hour.

supplies. From the very first he was inferior to the blockaded force. And reinforcements seldom if ever reached him from home. There he lay in the Gulf of Lions at the mercy of its storms: never complaining: finding every day on the contrary some valuable asset he had overlooked, some new quality in his fleet which made it a pleasure to command.

The like had not been seen since Hawke's blockade of Brest in the months preceding Quiberon: for the fleet actually improved by keeping. Nelson made the happiness of the men his own personal care. He fed them well: gathered from every shore abundance of fresh meat and vegetables; scoured the Mediterranean for dainties; coaxed the men to give up their grog in exchange for light Italian vintages; and bade defiance to scurvy by lemons from Sicily and shallots from Spain. And he banished monotony. He encouraged music, dancing, variety entertainments and exchange of hospitality between ships. He refused to allow hands to get jaded by the ceaseless round of dull duties. The storms, he said, provided ample opportunity for seacraft. Without endangering discipline he relaxed the grip of routine. He was more than repaid. The ships instead of praying for release dreaded lest necessity should drive them home: for timbers of course grew rotten and vessels crazy. But the health of the fleet was unprecedented. There was only one sick man in the fleet. And that was Nelson. The gales made him sea-sick: the daily anxiety which he disguised so well brought a throbbing pain in the stump of his arm: and his left eye, sympathetically affected, gave him good cause to fear that he would soon be totally blind. His body grew daily weaker, but his spirit conquered. "I must not be sick," he said, "until after the French fleet is taken:" and again: "I would die ten thousand deaths rather than give up my command when the enemy is expected every day at sea".

The memoirs of his chaplain and doctors afford a glimpse of his life on board the *Victory* at this time. He was called just before daylight. He immediately dressed and repaired on deck till breakfast was announced, when with Captain Hardy his inseparable friend, his chaplain, secretary, and one or two officers he would sit down to tea, hot rolls, toast and cold tongue. After breakfast, if not occupied in reading or writing dispatches or examining into the details of the fleet, he walked on the quarter-deck the greater part

of the forenoon. But often he would spend hours with his chaplain, Dr. Scott, who would translate aloud to him French, Spanish and Italian newspapers which he was always at pains to procure, together with letters public and private, taken in prizes. From these Nelson declared he got a more reliable insight into what was being done upon the Continent than from all the secret intelligence, official or otherwise.

From two o'clock a band played until a quarter to three when the drum beat to announce the Admiral's dinner. Weather permitting, he had several of his captains to dine with him. Their meal consisted of three courses with the choicest fruits, wines, coffee and liqueurs. But Nelson partook very sparingly himself; the wing of a fowl and a small plate of macaroni with a glass of champagne and water. At six his own little circle joined him for tea and fell into debate until eight or nine when the Admiral turned in. He seldom slept for more than two hours at a time. Often he would not quit the deck the whole night, and on these occasions he took no pains to protect himself from the weather. To dry his stockings he would often walk to and fro on the carpet in his cabin. This was to save his servants trouble: for with only one arm he could not change his clothes himself.

One dark stormy night there was a cry of "Man Overboard," and in a moment a midshipman was over the side saving a seaman's life at the risk of his own. Nelson was delighted and made him a lieutenant at once. The preferment was greeted with much applause from the young man's messmates. Nelson heard something ominous in the cheers. He therefore made them a little speech. "Mr. Flin," he said, "has done a gallant thing to-day and many gallant things in the past. For these I reward him. But mind, I'll have no more lieutenants for men falling overboard."

A notable feature of Nelson's blockade was his stern refusal to be drawn into a "half-begotten" battle of the French pattern. He cared nothing to capture one ship or two if the consequent injuries to his own side forced his fleet to withdraw altogether. This determination led to a humorous incident. M. Latouche-Tréville played in and out of Toulon like a mouse at the edge of its hole. One day he emerged to exercise his ships and a small British advance guard, bearing in mind the Admiral's instructions,

fell back on the main body. Because both English and French were sailing simultaneously south, Tréville, desiring to curry favour, sent to Napoleon saying that he had offered battle, but that Nelson had withdrawn in haste! "You have seen Latouche's letter," wrote Nelson, "how he chased me and how I ran. I keep it; and if I take him, by God I shall make him eat it!"

Nelson was cheated of his revenge; for Tréville died suddenly. He was replaced by Admiral Villeneuve, the most accomplished officer in the French service, and quite the ablest tactician. On the score of bravery his name alone was a diploma: for a Villeneuve fell beside Roland at Roncesvalles and a Villeneuve was bosom friend to the Chevalier Bayard. But it was for none of these reasons that Napoleon chose him. Napoleon was a firm believer in luck and Villeneuve was the one flag-officer who had carried his ship intact from the carnage of Aboukir.

Nelson's chief difficulty in the blockade arose when for water or other urgent need his ships were obliged to visit harbour. He felt it impossible to send them two or three at a time: because his fleet seldom numbered more than eight and the smallest detachment reduced it to impotence. Therefore when occasion arose he took the whole fleet away together: not to the Straits, but to some harbour in Sardinia so as still to be as near as possible. In so doing he was compelled to leave Toulon open; and though he comforted himself by the reflection that this might lead to a fight, it was certain that the Toulonese were busy with great preparations, and that Villeneuve might take advantage of his absence to be off on some errand of mischief.

And so indeed it proved in the beginning of 1805. Nelson was in Sardinia and his frigates informed him that the French were out. The wind which had been east for a fortnight was now blowing steady from north-west, and freshening every minute. In such weather no one could really make the Straits and Nelson concluded that Napoleon meditated some fresh raid on the Ottoman Empire. Off he winged; and after putting a girdle round the entire Mediterranean was back at Toulon by the end of March to find the French snugly in port. He had not lost a single spar in spite of the wild weather: and was pleased to hear that Villeneuve's fleet had behaved in lubberly fashion, shed a few topmasts in the Gulf of Lions and hurried back under

cover. But he was more puzzled than ever to know what their intentions were.

These can only be explained by reference to Napoleon's scheme for "terminating the existence of the Power that had oppressed France for six centuries".

At Boulogne he had gathered the army of England. He had collected there thousands of flat-bottomed boats. He was prepared in two hours to embark 150,000 men.* But before doing so it was essential that he should, for a definite period,† exercise undisputed control of the Channel from Cape Gris Nez to the Lizard. His first need was to remove the British fleet. A difficult problem. But setting aside the expedients of the past, he approached it in the light of his own experience. In 1798 a combined expedition from Toulon had drawn after it to Egypt the British force in the Mediterranean. If similar expeditions, he argued, set out from Brest and Toulon for more distant lands, India perhaps and the Lesser Antilles; then the whole naval power of Britain would be deflected from European waters.

Such was his scheme in its first hard outline. But closer study of the whole problem showed him it was insufficient. The presence of British small craft in the Channel made it impossible for his army to cross without a battle-fleet escort. He must therefore rid himself of the British fleet and at the same time employ his own. He altered his plan. To reinforce his naval power he dragged Spain into the war. He had fleets at Toulon, Carthagena, Cadiz, Coruña-Ferrol, and Brest. If united these would make an armada, some fifty or sixty strong. He resolved to unite them: not in Europe; but at a distant and secret rendezvous. Each squadron in turn would elude the British blockade, slip out of Brest and disappear. The result would be the same as in the former case. The British would disperse: some to Egypt, some to India, some to the Antilles, some to Canada. But his own fleets would unite at Fort Royal, Martinique, return invincible and hold the Channel.

This new scheme pleased the great master of war: but as its success in great degree depended on the simultaneous departure of half a dozen fleets, he judged further modification needful, and

* His own untruthful estimate: 90,000 in eighteen hours would be nearer the truth.

† Varying in his different estimates from four days to half a dozen hours.

introduced fresh amendment. He left the Rochefort squadron to act by itself; but he instructed the Toulon fleet after setting out to pick up the ships at Carthagena and Cadiz; and the Brest fleet to call at Ferrol. Three fleets instead of six would thus join at Fort Royal. And one safeguard suggested another. Admiral Villeneuve was warned to stay in the Indies not longer than forty days. If the period passed without news of the rest, then would he sail at once to Ferrol, unite his ships with the squadron there and in overpowering strength drive off Cornwallis and release the fleet at Brest.* But this last alternative was for use only in extremity. The three fleets, it was hoped, would join without mishap.

Any military plan formed by the great Napoleon must command respect, and the present though dealing with a maze of details attracts by the magic of its harmony. Yet at the core it was unsound.

Napoleon was handicapped by ignorance of oceanic campaigning. When he suggested driving off Cornwallis and releasing the fleet at Brest he was asking his Admirals an impossible thing. For whatever might be their superiority, the wind which enabled them to attack the blockading force would effectively prevent the fleet in port from weighing anchor and joining them.

Examples might be multiplied. But after all Napoleon's capital error lay in his failure to appreciate the Admirals opposed to him. For one thing he classed them altogether: instead of crediting Nelson with strategic skill equal to his own. Who won the campaign of 1798? What security had he that Nelson would not detect as easily and overthrow as ruthlessly this scheme as he had done the Egyptian? It was secret. It was complex. It was appointed for the other side of the world. Were these guarantees sufficient?

And suppose that the British Admirals were all alike. Even so, he was grievously at fault. For his every plan presupposed that they would act, not as British Admirals had acted in the past, but as he, Napoleon, required in the present. In his first scheme they were to follow his armaments to the Lesser Antilles and India. But would they do so? Was it certain? They might prefer to stay at home. And if they preferred to stay at

* Reciprocal instructions were issued to the fleet at Brest. The fleet at Rochefort was negligibly small.

home when they knew where his squadrons were going, what was there to induce them to play blind-man's buff when the destination of his fleets remained a secret!

The British without knowing a detail of Napoleon's scheme had from centuries of experience evolved a method of defence which supplied a complete answer. Their idea was this. Any British blockading force confronted with difficulties which it could not surmount would simply fall back on Cornwallis at Brest. That was all! Therefore suppose that Napoleon achieved the very maximum of success. Suppose that all his squadrons escaped from port; reunited at Martinique and sailed majestically back. Then on their arrival at the mouth of the Channel they would find waiting them a British fleet comprising every single ship that had taken part in the blockade. And this British fleet would be fresher far than themselves who had crossed the Atlantic.

England in "eighteen hundred and war-time" was in a finer panic than any that had seized her since the days of Drake. Every citizen became a soldier. Even the Premier donned a uniform. Martello towers were built along the coast, beacons erected on every high hill, a military canal dug out in Kent. There was not a landsman but thought that the conqueror who entered every metropolis from Moscow to Lisbon would sooner or later "cross the ditch which offered no real difficulties to the audacious". And this panic that robbed our forefathers of repose has become in a sense traditional. It is still regarded as reasonable, excusable and real.

There is no need at all to quarrel with the view. But it was not shared by the sailors. Cornwallis and Nelson at sea just as much as Jervis at the Admiralty knew that Napoleon must wait for his fleet and that his fleet would never reach Boulogne. It is necessary at the outset to insist on this, for the absolute confidence of the sailors in the security of their defence led them cheerfully to accept risks and hazards which might well be described as astounding if the Trafalgar Campaign had been defensive. The Trafalgar Campaign was never defensive. It was England who declared war: and her sailors from that moment strove so completely to crush the navy of France that never during the remainder of the war should it dare to challenge them. Trafalgar did not deliver England from invasion. It established her domination of

the waterways and enabled her from the great deep to work out the deliverance of Europe.*

CHAPTER II. THE CHASE

Round the world if need be, and round the world again,
With a lame duck lagging all the way!

—NEWBOLT.

Villeneuve's first rush out of port on a westerly breeze was a false start. Soon after Nelson's return from Egypt he was ready to try again; and when on 30th March a fair wind rose in the north there was nothing but a frigate or two to hinder his escape. He crept out and by good fortune learned that Nelson was off Sardinia watering. Borne easily along by the following wind he had the further good fortune to shake off Nelson's cruisers, and slipping between the coast of Spain and the Balearic Isles, he called at Carthagena for its squadron, then bolted through the Straits and paused breathlessly at Cadiz. There was a small British squadron here under Sir John Orde; but it was too weak to resist him and fell back before him on Cornwallis. Had it hung upon his coat-tails, it might have learned where he was going; but with a run of luck that almost justified the motives for Napoleon's choice, Villeneuve started off across the Atlantic unobserved; and on 14th May arrived at Martinique. The Cadiz ships added to his own made up a fleet of eighteen sail; a force already double the size of that which under Nelson he had left behind. So far Napoleon's expectations were fulfilled to the smallest letter.

Villeneuve's orders allowed him in his interval of waiting to do whatever damage he could to the British islands. But waiting was his preoccupation. He besieged the British in an islet which they had brazenly seized off Martinique and christened "H.M. Sloop *Diamond Rock*"; but he went about the task half-heartedly. He was thinking all the while of the other fleets. In conse-

* There is some reason to believe that Napoleon's belief in his invasion scheme was no firmer than that of Lord St. Vincent. Why otherwise did he bolster it up with such mendacious comedies as the medal "Frappée à Londres"? But in any case he stood to gain. If he landed in England, well: if he "was prevented from doing so by the fatuous behaviour of our Admirals" (!) at least he had at Boulogne excuse for mobilizing an army which he could at any moment employ against Austria,

quence it was not till 3rd June that the "sloop" hauled down her flag.

Another fleet arrived next day.

Which was it? Was it the fleet from Rochefort? Or the larger fleet from Brest?

It was the British Mediterranean Fleet under Admiral Lord Nelson of the Nile!

. . . . . .

In the name of wonder how did he do it? How did he know where the French had gone? How did he overtake them? There is a temptation to ascribe all to the wonder-working intuition of genius. Something of course must be allowed for this. But Nelson grounded his resolution to cross the Atlantic on something more admirable than guesswork.

When in Sardinia he heard that Villeneuve was out again, he had not, it is true, the dimmest idea of Villeneuve's destination. The West Indies suggested themselves but, in the face of persistent rumours that India was in danger, he provisioned for Bombay, and shipped a specialist in Oriental languages. All was vague. "Every country formed a possible objective."

He had, however, on his return from Egypt set a line of frigates from the southern shore of Sardinia to the opposite coast of Africa. Therefore when he heard that the French were sailing south, that is to say, were not attempting to weather the north of Corsica, he knew they could not reach Naples or Egypt without passing his line. They were making then for the Straits. He struggled after them: but the winds were foul and when he arrived at Gibraltar the only thing he knew for certain was that Villeneuve had gained a month's start. Had he concealed himself in some neighbouring port? Nelson examined with his own eyes Carthagena and Cadiz and Lisbon. Had he gone north to the English Channel or joined the fleet at Brest? Clearly no; for in less than a month news of this would have reached the Rock. What then? Was it Bombay or Barbados? To this alternative Nelson reduced his problem: reasoned it out thus clearly in a whirl of conflicting evidence that would have held nine men out of ten inactive and driven the tenth insane. And he made up his mind at once. In the West Indies British interests were more valuable and more vulnerable. Therefore to the West Indies he went: went in de-

fiance of the rule that forbade a Commander-in-Chief to leave his station; went in defiance of the rule that bade the doubtful fall back on Cornwallis.

Villeneuve, fresh from port, with every aid to speed that a dockyard could supply, crossed the Atlantic in thirty-four days. Nelson, who had maintained a strict blockade for the best part of two years, who all that time had kept his ships at sea without resort to an English base, who but recently had taken his crazy ships all the way to Egypt and back, crossed the Atlantic in twenty-four days, and this in spite of the "Old *Superb*".

> The Old *Superb* was barnacled and green as grass below,
> Her sticks were only fit for stirring grog;
> The pride of all her midshipmen was silent long ago,
> And long ago they ceased to heave the log.

But Captain Keats begged Nelson not to leave him behind, and Nelson had not the heart to refuse. For who did not honour the Old *Superb!* Who had not heard how she played hobgoblin with two Spanish first-rates, inducing them to fight each other in the dark till both were destroyed by fire; and she the while by the light of it was busy taking a third! But she grew slower as they proceeded, and earned the execrations of the fleet. Time was everything: and she held them back. Really it was too absurd! Why didn't the Admiral turn her round and send her waddling home? The Admiral did write the *Superb* a letter, and this is what he said:—

Victory, May 19, 1805.

My Dear Keats,

I am fearful that you may think the *Superb* does not go as fast as I could wish. However that may be, (for if we all went ten knots, I should not think it fast enough,) yet I would have you assured that I know and feel that the *Superb* does all which is possible for a ship to accomplish; and I desire that you will not fret.

The man who could write such a letter might well work miracles. As for Captain Keats "he obtained permission not to stop when other ships did, but always to carry a press of sail; and he lashed his studding-sail booms to the yards, as the constant direction of the trade winds allows them to be carried steadily". So

> Every night the Old *Superb* she sailed while others slept,
> Till we ran the French to earth with all the rest!

. . . . . .

When Nelson arrived at Barbados Villeneuve was still at Martinique; but in the very act of setting out to raid the Leeward Islands. If Nelson had been guided by instinct alone it is almost certain that he would have come up with the foe in the very place where Rodney crushed De Grasse on the famous "Twelfth of April". It would have been a great battle; for there were twelve of the French, six of the Spaniards, and Nelson had in all but ten. His directions were simple. He bade his captains take a Frenchman apiece. He would manage the Spaniards himself. But the colonials, cruel in their wish to be kind, sent him off on a false trail. To anything like an ordinary rumour Nelson would not have lent a moment's credence. But here was unimpeachable testimony from the British general commanding at St. Lucia. The allied fleet, he reported, had gone south to Trinidad. So to Trinidad Nelson sailed; only to lose his labour and find the island unmolested. Without repining he turned again north to retrieve the mistake if he could. Antigua was safe and St. Kitts and Nevis. What had become of the allied fleet? Gone to Jamaica, said the wiseacres: but Nelson was not to be caught a second time. Learning that French soldiers had disembarked at Guadeloupe he instantly decided that Villeneuve had abandoned his enterprise and was already on his way to Europe. Without a moment's delay he turned to pursue and sent ahead the *Curieux* brig to warn the Admiralty.

The *Curieux* overtook Villeneuve and not only counted his numbers, but made a note of his latitude and longitude; then, resuming her journey, delivered her fateful news. The First Lord carefully scrutinized the reckoning and guessed that the allied fleet were making for Ferrol. He acted with a promptness and decision worthy of the crisis. At Ferrol there was a large Spanish fleet watched by a small one under Sir Robert Calder. The nearest British fleet was watching Rochefort. The First Lord ordered the whole of the Rochefort blockade, without the loss of a minute, to join Calder, and with him stand well out to sea on the Ferrol latitude. By this masterstroke he placed at Villeneuve's landfall a fleet little inferior to Villeneuve's own.

Sir Robert Calder was a man of distinguished talents, of unquestioned bravery, of undisputed skill. He had been brought up in a grand school, had been Jervis's captain at St. Vincent.

But he had not in him the fire of which heroes are made. He was not the man whom a crisis produces. He did not see that fate had made him master of the greatest naval campaign. He did not know that the history of England and of Europe paused to see what his answer would be. He did not see around him on his quarter-deck the shades of Drake and Blake, of Hawke and Albemarle. He met Villeneuve. He fought Villeneuve. And on technical grounds he defeated Villeneuve, for two Spanish ships fell to leeward from their wounds and Calder snapped them up and kept them. But, paradoxical as it may appear, he was not in reality victorious.

Villeneuve's object was to join his own fleet with the squadrons that Calder blockaded. He preferred, if it were possible, to do so without fighting. But he fought; and accomplished his purpose. After resting at Vigo he arrived at Ferrol. And Calder fell back on Cornwallis! Not Villeneuve, but himself was the challenger. Yet the action accomplished nothing but to force him back on the defensive. Rodney before The Saints and Howe before the Glorious First, each compelled his adversary to drop a ship or two. But not for a moment on that account did they consider their task at an end. Had either of them been in Calder's place he would have sunk the wretched prizes and compelled his foe to fight to the death.

"If only Nelson had been there!" men said.

And Nelson was so near and yet so far. Calder fought on 22nd July. On the 20th at Gibraltar Nelson went ashore; "the first time for two years wanting ten days". Though he had left the Indies days after Villeneuve he had arrived in Europe first. He was not shuddering for England's safety. He sought only to find the allied fleet and "give them a drubbing". So he threw himself in front of the Straits to head them off from Toulon. At Cadiz he found his old friend Collingwood,* who had replaced Sir John Orde. There was no news to be had of the French, and Nelson, quite at the end of his resources, fell back on Cornwallis at Brest.

* No one more than Collingwood had enjoyed the Amiens truce. He spent his time in gardening, in copying extracts from the best authors to improve his style and in walking about the country-side with a pocketful of acorns which he planted in every likely spot, that the Navy might never want oak-trees.

This then was the situation at the beginning of August. Napoleon with his legions was still at Boulogne. Villeneuve had linked the Toulon fleet with the Cadiz, and the Cadiz with the Ferrol. He had lost two ships, but still had twenty-nine. The Rochefort fleet of five were unwatched. They could join him when they liked.* What was there to prevent him from sailing at once, as Napoleon wished, to the mouth of the Channel? The whole of the might of the British Navy had concentrated there. They were not playing blind-man's buff. They had not a moment's anxiety for an unlocated foe. They had thirty-eight stout ships of the line, many of them first-rates. Not for so much as a hair-breadth of time did Cornwallis expect the arrival of the allied fleet. He asked for nothing better, but he knew they would not come. Eleven of them were raw Spanish ships that had never set bowsprit out of harbour; the rest after a wearing journey had fetched Ferrol which had no supplies. And so at what appeared to landsmen the gravest conjuncture in Britain's history, when every ship should have been in the Channel, Cornwallis with his accustomed *sang-froid* proceeded to act as follows. He sent Nelson home for a rest; he sent the Old *Superb* into port to refit; and of the thirty-six vessels that remained he gave half to Calder, bidding him to go and try again; and half he kept himself. Some have condemned him for rashness. But a well-judged rashness was the mark of Billy-Blue, and a campaign cannot be won without risks. It was about this time that Gantheaume, who had twenty sail to his flag, somewhat incautiously put his head out of Brest. Cornwallis literally punched it and the head apologetically withdrew.

Nelson, released by Cornwallis, returned home in the depths of depression. To his own view he had failed miserably enough. He had left his station without leave, crossed the Atlantic and missed his prey; recrossed the Atlantic and missed it again. What would his England say? Happily he had not long to wait. The people could not rightly see what it was that he had done: but ever before their eyes was the vision of a little man with a tiny force of ten ships chasing a fleet just twice the size round and round the world. He was so small and so frail: and he did such

* Theoretically! Villeneuve sent the *Didon* to fetch them. But the *Didon* was captured by the *Phœnix* after one of the most splendid frigate actions on record.

wonderful things. They tried to cheer: and could not even do that, for the lump rose in their throats. So they wept instead; or knelt and asked his blessing as if he had been a saint. The Admiralty welcomed him effusively. Their barriers were broken down. They gave him their fullest confidence. They appreciated in the liveliest way his single-minded purpose for his country's good; they testified to his supreme strategic merit. And they were grateful to him. He had enabled them to resume their campaign without distraction. He had unmasked the plot of the Corsican Ogre, and pricked the bubble of the invasion scare.

At the end of August, Napoleon threw up his hand and marched away from Boulogne.

But though the Emperor neither waited nor very much cared to hear the further adventures of Villeneuve, in England the possibility of destroying the Allied Fleet remained the only topic of interest. The snake had been scotched. It must now be killed. On 1st September the *Euryalus* frigate dropped anchor in the Solent and Captain Blackwood hiring a chaise dashed for London at break-neck speed. On his way he called at Merton to tell Nelson his news. Villeneuve had avoided Sir Robert Calder and was once more out of port! Nelson followed his intelligencer to London* and instantly offered his services. The news was not quite so good as at first it looked. Villeneuve, it seemed, had merely exchanged his base from Ferrol to Cadiz, where Calder's force had joined Collingwood and instantly shut him in. His move was almost certainly occasioned by nothing more than the lack in Ferrol of all facilities for re-equipping his fleet. But the Admiralty closed with Nelson's offer. To him belonged by prescriptive right the privilege of dealing once for all with the fleet of Napoleon the Great. The First Lord offered him every assistance, and handed him the Navy List with an invitation to choose what officers he liked. "Choose yourself, my Lord," said Nelson. "The same spirit actuates the whole service."

Nelson left Merton for the last time on the night of 13th September. Next morning early he arrived at Portsmouth and

* It was during his visit to London that Nelson for the only time met Wellington. The two stood by chance in an ante-room waiting an audience with Lord Castlereagh: the sailor on his way to establish Britain's sea-power; the soldier, just returned from India, opportunely to work upon the basis of that sea-power for the deliverance of Europe from her scourge.

breakfasted at the "George". To escape the crowds he slipped out at the back into Penny Street, and, avoiding the usual place of embarkation, went down to the bathing machines. But the crowds were everywhere. They thronged and surged round him, not roughly and noisily but with tender reverence, as if they knew it was "Good-bye," and wanted not to shriek themselves hoarse but just to see his face once more. There was something unusual in the silent leave-taking of a great crowd. They gazed at him as he got into the boat: their gaze followed him as he rowed away. A little figure stood up and waved his hat to them: and still they waited and gazed. "I had their huzzas before," said Nelson. "Now I have their hearts."

Nelson joined the fleet on 29th September, his forty-seventh birthday. He had the *Euryalus* in company, and not desiring that Villeneuve should know of his arrival he sent her ahead to forbid any hoisting of colours or salute of guns. But Collingwood and his captains devised a token of their gladness that he was come. Nelson liked his ships to have two yellow streaks and black port-lids to chequer them. So when they knew that he was on his way, they all began with one accord to paint their ships "à la Nelson". "The reception I met with on joining the fleet," he wrote, "caused the sweetest sensation of my life. The officers who came on board to welcome my return forgot my rank as Commander-in-Chief in the enthusiasm with which they greeted me. . . . And when I came to explain to them the '*Nelson Touch*' it was like an electric shock."

The "*Nelson Touch*" was his battle-plan to defeat the Allied Fleet.

CHAPTER III. THE BATTLE

Heard ye the thunder of battle,
Low in the south and afar?
Saw ye the flush of the death-cloud
Crimson o'er Trafalgar? —PALGRAVE.

The first business was to induce the allied fleet to come out of Cadiz. Dreading a repetition of the tedious blockade of Toulon, Nelson determined in the last extremity to enter the harbour and push them out. Meanwhile he blockaded the entire Andalusian coast to see what hunger would do. And he disposed his fleet in a decoy-blockade. The inshore squadron he replaced by a handful

of frigates under Captain Blackwood of the *Euryalus;* and the main body of the fleet he removed a considerable distance to the west. Between himself and the frigates he placed his fastest two-deckers so that he might keep the Allied Fleet in ignorance of his numbers and learn without a moment's delay any movement on Villeneuve's part.

Happily for his purpose, Napoleon also desired the Allied Fleet to leave Cadiz without delay. His immediate ambitions were not concerned with the Peninsula, but with Austria and Italy; and if the fleet was to co-operate with him, its place was the Mediterranean. He put his view before the Admirals, and Villeneuve called a Council of War. By this time it was known that Nelson was outside and the Council decided by a considerable majority that to shift its quarters to the Mediterranean would entail a risk out of all proportion to any advantage to be derived from the change. For Napoleon this could only mean one thing. Villeneuve was an arrant coward. Were all his plans then one after another to be thwarted by the caprices of a poltroon! With senseless fury he signed Villeneuve's recall and in hot haste dispatched a successor. The news of his disgrace reached Villeneuve on 18th October, and unable to endure the unmerited reproach, he resolved against his better judgment to put at once to sea. There was this to console him: news that Nelson had sent away to Gibraltar no less than six of the line.

The report was true enough. Nelson, unsuspicious of what was agitating Villeneuve's brain, and looking for no immediate movement, had sent a contingent to water and refit. Not only this; but the six included his most trusted captains, "Ben" Hallowell, Louis and others. He sent them first, because he wanted to make sure of their early return. Nor did this conclude the deductions from his fleet. So great had been the outcry against Calder that the Admiralty offered him the chance of clearing himself. He was eager to return and take his trial. Nelson had no love for him. But he considered that he had been despitefully used and, therefore, instead of sending him to England in a frigate, allowed him to return in his flagship, a vessel equal at least to a pair of seventy-fours.

This magnanimity was the more remarkable because Nelson desired that in the coming conflict the force at his disposal should

be something more than merely sufficient. The country, he argued, wanted not a gallant success in the face of odds but a crowning victory. "Only numbers can annihilate," he said. The Admiralty did their best and sent him reinforcements when they could. Among late arrivals was the old *Agamemnon* with Berry, his "Stormy Petrel" in command. Nelson's spirits rose with a bound. "Hurrah!" he cried. "Now we shall have a fight."

And so there were still twenty-seven of the line outside Cadiz on the day Villeneuve heard of his dismissal. But Villeneuve did not know this. They were out of sight and he could not count them. He knew there had been originally twenty-seven. Allowing for absentees he estimated that Nelson had twenty-one. From the contemplation of his own thirty-three he therefore derived a feeling not far from satisfaction.

He did not intend to offer battle unless compelled. But the contingency might arise. In preparing for it he had in his mind a vision of Aboukir. He made sure that Nelson's attack would be massed on his van or rear. To prevent this he divided the Allied Fleet into two squadrons. The larger under his own direction made up twenty-one sail so as to be exactly equal to the entire British force. The remaining twelve were constituted into a reserve, which by keeping to windward would be able to succour whatever part of the line was imperilled. Gravina, Commander-in-Chief of the Spaniards, took charge of them. He could be trusted to play his part with distinction, for ever since the days when he bombarded Gibraltar in an *Indestructible* his name had sounded the very echo of gallantry. Villeneuve's anticipations were shrewd and his dispositions sound. He made no attempt to group his ships by nationalities. French and Spaniards took station side by side.

It was Saturday, 19th October, when the first of them got to sea. Nelson had just invited "Coll" to dine with him. He cancelled the invitation by signal, and made all sail to the south-east to head the foe off the Straits. But only part of Villeneuve's force got to sea that day and Nelson came back again.

On Sunday the weather was abominable. It rained all the day long. But Nelson still kept in touch; and still kept out of sight. When evening fell he sent Blackwood word that a special effort was needed: and all night long British cruisers patrolled like

watchmen, while the enemy put them in mind of a London street with its long array of lamps. All through the night blue fires of his own invention told Nelson exactly what Villeneuve was doing; and move for move he turned his fleet about. Only the *Africa*, a little sixty-four, failed to keep her station in the line.

Monday, the famous 21st October, opened gloriously. The sky was cloudless, the breeze was light from west-north-west and the mighty ships were lifted along by a heavy rolling swell from the Atlantic. At daybreak the Britons saw the enemy, midway between them and the Andalusian shore some ten or twelve miles away. Nelson as ever was early on deck. He was dressed in his Admiral's frock-coat, bearing on the left breast four stars of different orders. For the first time he forgot his sword. He put it ready, but left it lying on his cabin-table. The drum beat to quarters;* and he signalled his fleet to advance in order of sailing; that is to say, in two lines ahead, moving abreast of each other. His own line was the more northerly of the two and nearer the wind.

Much of the interest of Trafalgar lies in the fact that it was Nelson's first pitched battle. As the great master of naval warfare how did he propose to win a decisive victory against a mobile enemy in ordered array? The very essence of his plan was to mass his strength upon part only of the Allied Fleet. At the Nile he had clustered on the van; but (for obvious reasons) of a fleet in motion he preferred to attack the rear. To execute this manœuvre he considered it ridiculous to conform to custom, to draw up his line parallel to the enemy's and co-extensive with it. He did not condemn co-extension. Still less did he condemn parallelism. But he deemed a twelve hours' fighting-day too short for such delicate adjustment.

Therefore he subdivided his fleet into two squadrons. In doing so he departed entirely from precedent, for this subdivision must not be compared with Rodney's, when he put part of his fleet under the command of Hood; or Rooke's when he put part under Shovel. Nelson's two squadrons were to all intents and purposes entirely separate fleets, independent in their control and absolutely distinct in their functions. They must be considered separately.

"Squadron One" was intended primarily for destruction.

* As in Drake's day. The bugle was not introduced until after Trafalgar.

Nelson had hoped to make it very strong, but his ships were few. He could only spare fifteen. These were to match themselves with the rearmost twelve of the enemy, retaining an advantage in numbers of twenty-five per cent. Their method of attack would be parallel. They would break the enemy's rear at all points in the manner prescribed by Lord Howe. Nelson handed over the command of them with hardly a reservation to Collingwood his lifelong friend, who at St. Vincent had so exactly interpreted what was in his mind, and battered the foe with so unanswerable a force.

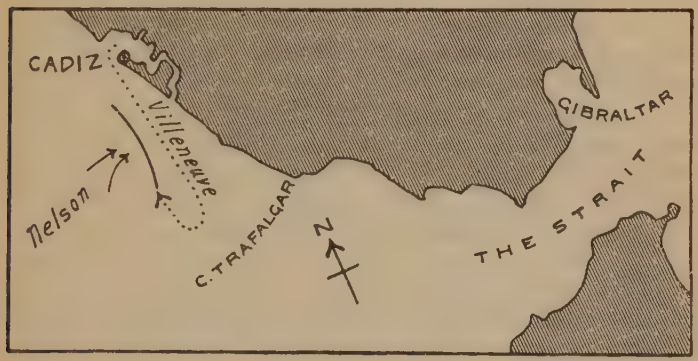
There was nothing new in an attack on the rear. Rodney had tried it at Martinique. But because it was known and because it had been tried, a counterstroke had been sought and long ago discovered. The remedy consisted in wearing the threatened fleet all together. Then the part imperilled became *ipso facto* the van, and the centre and rear astern of it moved up to its support. For this reason one thing was morally certain. Unless some new *motif* were introduced Villeneuve would experience no difficulty in parrying Collingwood's attack upon his rear.

Hence arose the need of "Squadron Two".

"Squadron Two," which Nelson designed for himself, had a supremely difficult task. It had to deal with the remainder of the fleet and prevent them from interrupting Collingwood's game or guessing where their danger lay. Nelson had given Collingwood fifteen ships. He had twelve left for himself; twelve to bewilder twenty-one. He asked for no more. If at the last moment he had received reinforcements, he would have given them to Collingwood. This was the first part of his duty. When he had confused the foe and paralysed their initiative, he intended to use his force in completing Collingwood's work and overpowering the hostile centre. He hoped to employ his twenty-seven ships on at most two-thirds of those opposed to him, neglecting their van altogether. If the scheme succeeded he hoped to take twenty ships. Everything depended on his little force of twelve. For Collingwood he had prescribed a definite attack; line abreast parallel to the foe. He left himself an entirely free hand, setting down no rule to bind him; to the end that he might deliver his attack as the need of the moment dictated.

As the English bore down, Villeneuve realized for the first time the mistake he had made in his estimate of their number. The

shock of the discovery threw him back on the strict defensive: and he signalled at once to Gravina to bring his detached squadron into line again. This step may have been necessary. It was certainly retrograde. It was a sacrifice of originality. Yet no one on the battle-field was clearer-headed than Villeneuve. He probably thought it unwise to abandon formal methods in the presence of such a master as Nelson. He considered next what his opponent intended to do, and with extraordinary judgment concluded that he intended to attack the allied rear. So at eight o'clock he ordered the prescribed remedy. He signalled the whole fleet to wear: a simultaneous movement, every ship going about at once. Under the circumstances no better plan could



CADIZ AND TRAFALGAR

have been devised. It was too early, perhaps, to guard him entirely from an attack which was as yet but partly developed. But there were other advantages. The fleet had been sailing southwards. By turning on the opposite tack he brought under his lee Cadiz to safeguard himself in the last extremity, and the shoals of Trafalgar to imperil his adversary. Furthermore, the difficulty of going about in light airs and on a heavy swell with the attempt of Gravina to merge himself in the regular array had the effect of throwing the combined fleet into a disorderly order; the ships not in single line ahead but in a more or less reduplicated line as De Ruyter's had been on 4th June, 1666. This was without doubt the best method of frustrating an attempt to break the line

in all places after the manner of Lord Howe. Indeed, some of the English sailors thought it must have been designed for the purpose.

Nelson was deceived by the manœuvre. He did not for a moment interpret it as a battle move. He jumped to the entirely wrong idea that Villeneuve was flying, and flying in disorder. Therefore he began his attack as Hawke had done at Quiberon; or rather he opened a double Quiberon attack like Duncan's at Camperdown; himself and Collingwood leading, while their respective squadrons formed up astern in order of speed.*

The lightness of the breeze made the advance of the British necessarily slow in spite of their efforts. During this interval Nelson visited the decks. He went slowly from gun to gun, finding everywhere some cheery word of praise or encouragement. The men, great sturdy fellows, most of them, were stripped to the waist; with handkerchiefs ready to bind over their ears the moment that firing began. They stood to attention and tugged their forelocks when Admiral "Nel" came along. The utmost joy prevailed at the thought of battle. The bands played "Hearts of Oak" and "Britons, strike home". Every ship at Nelson's orders had at least three flags, a white ensign and two Union Jacks.

About eleven o'clock Lieutenant Pasco, signal lieutenant of the *Victory*, went on a matter of business to Nelson's cabin. He came in quietly, and found the Admiral on his knees,—writing. He withdrew at once, but afterwards they found the paper just as the Admiral had left it. And this is what Nelson wrote:—

May the Great God, whom I worship, grant to my Country and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory; and may no misconduct in any one tarnish it; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet. For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my Country faithfully. To him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen. Amen. Amen.

* The resemblance to Camperdown ends here. Duncan approached in two columns because that arrangement had recently been adopted as the normal order of sailing, and he would not stop to deploy. But there was with him no conscious division into two fleets, each with its own separate functions. Nelson gratefully acknowledged that he had studied Camperdown with advantage: but then he skilfully wove into his masterpiece all the good ideas of the past.

After writing this he went on deck and mounting the poop ordered certain signals to be made. And about a quarter to twelve he said, "Mr. Pasco, I wish to say to the fleet, ENGLAND CONFIDES THAT EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY"; and he added: "You must be quick, for I have one more to make, which is for close action". Pasco replied: "If your Lordship will permit me to substitute *Expects* for *Confides*, the signal will soon be completed, because the word *Expects* is in the vocabulary but *Confides* must be spelled". Nelson replied in haste and with seeming satisfaction: "That will do, Pasco; make it directly".

The signal was greeted with a shout of answering acclamation. Nelson then ordered that for "Close Action" to be hoisted to the top-gallant masthead and kept flying. This done, he turned to Blackwood (who early in the morning had come aboard for instructions) and said: "Now I can do no more. We must trust to the great Disposer of all events and to the justice of our cause. I thank God for this great opportunity of doing my duty."

When not otherwise engaged, Nelson kept a close watch upon the enemy. About the middle of the morning, when they were yet some three miles away, he turned to Blackwood with one of his eager exclamations. "They put a good face on it!" he said. The remark was occasioned by the discovery that Villeneuve was after all not running away. So far from running he had hove to, and was calmly amending his line. This then, if any, was the moment to deploy; to abandon the Hawke-like winging and get into "Line Abreast". There is no doubt that it was Nelson's original intention to do so. But with one of the inspirations that came to him time and again in moments of stress he resolved to keep on in line ahead. With unmistakable clearness he saw that this was the ideal way to keep the enemy in suspense. For what would his advance mean to them? He might at the last deploy on their van. He might deploy on their centre. He might cut through in Rodney fashion and pass along their centre. He might cut through in Rodney fashion and pass along their van. He would not commit himself irrevocably to any project. And if he did not know himself what he was going to do, how should the enemy know? In this way he would keep them inactive to the last, and "Coll" would do his business undisturbed.

If Nelson had survived Trafalgar nothing would have amused

him more than the efforts of those who strove to prove that the perpendicular attack was the greatest discovery of his genius, the tactical panacea. At St. Vincent, the Nile and Copenhagen he had accepted mighty risks, but nothing approaching this, the last and mightiest risk of all. Theoretically, it meant absolute and inevitable destruction, not only for himself, not only for the *Victory*, but for the whole of the squadron he commanded. They would come into action one by one, while the enemy defiling past would pile up strength in a solid mass and rake them out of existence.

Those that gathered round Villeneuve were the bravest of the brave. They were worthy to have fought with Brueys at the Nile, or shared with their countrymen in any of the triumphs of Napoleon. Villeneuve reminded them of what their Emperor expected. "Any captain," so ran his last signal, "any Captain who is not under fire, is out of his station!" As for the Spaniards they were worthy of Oquendo. Captain Churruca of the *Nepomuceno* sent this last message to his family: "If you hear that my ship has been taken, then you will know that I am dead".

How then did Nelson dare this last daring?

It should surprise no one to hear that though he adopted the perpendicular attack on the very battlefield, yet he had in advance made careful preparations to minimize its peril. In the first place he had put at the head of his line a cluster of three-deckers, *Victory*, *Temeraire*, and *Neptune*. He believed that these could at least for a time stand up against any odds that the allied fleet could bring against them. And that the time might not be too long either under fire as they approached, or without succour when engaged, he dispensed with the customary battle-rig, and set all courses, with topsails, top-gallants, royals and studding-sails.

Yet for all that the risk was stupendous. All on board the *Victory* were very sensible of this and betrayed the utmost anxiety for their chief. They tried to persuade each other to ask him to cover his decorations or wear some other coat. But nobody could be induced to approach him on this head. "In honour I gained them," he had said at the Nile, "and in honour I will die with them." Captain Blackwood, however, ventured to invite him to forsake the *Victory* and conduct the battle by signal from the *Euryalus*. It was a feasible plan and kindly meant. Nelson

would none of it. Then Blackwood asked that the *Temeraire* might lead the line in the *Victory's* place. Perhaps Nelson prided himself that the *Temeraire* could not overhaul him. He smiled at Hardy, and consented. Blackwood with his lungs of brass gave the order and the *Temeraire*, who was flying light, began to draw up level. Nelson stepped up to the poop, and speaking as he always did with a slightly nasal intonation called out: "I'll trouble you, Captain Harvey, to keep your place, which is *astarn* of the *Victory*".

It must not be thought that Nelson alone was insensible of the danger: or that he was carried away by the excitement of the moment. What he did, he did with his eyes open, and because he deemed it necessary. The pace of the *Victory* in spite of her sky-scrapers was slow. As they drew into the danger-zone the enemy fired single shots to find the range. The sixth of these flew through the main top-gallant sail. It was time for Blackwood to be gone. Nelson gave him his last instructions: bade him pass down the line, speak each vessel and tell her to get into battle as best she could. The favourite frigate-captain bidding his master adieu, expressed the hope that in a few hours he would be back to congratulate him on twenty prizes. Nelson wrung his hand. "God bless you, Blackwood," he said. "I shall never speak to you again."

. . . . . .

When Nelson sailed for Trafalgar
With all his country's best,
He held them dear as brothers are,
But one beyond the rest.

Collingwood was early astir on the morning of Trafalgar and began the day by disproving the old adage that no man is a hero to his valet. His servant calling him at dawn found the Admiral already half-dressed. Collingwood asked him if he had seen the combined fleet and placed him in a good position. The sight was magnificent, but what amazed the servant as he looked was the entirely calm way in which his master went on shaving. Shortly afterwards Clavell, his first lieutenant, paid him a visit. Collingwood said: "You had better put on silk stockings as I have done; for if one should get a shot in the leg they would be so much more manageable for the surgeon". After he had visited

the decks he turned to his officers and exclaimed: "Now, gentlemen, let us do something to-day which the world may talk of hereafter".

Quite early in the morning, Collingwood signalled to his squadron to take order in *line abreast*. But as they proceeded to obey, he found himself confronted with a difficulty. According to the prescribed plan it was his part to open the attack. It was his part to deliver trenchant blows while Nelson made use of artifice. Yet here was Nelson dashing ahead; minded, it would seem, to leave him behind. Collingwood thought for a moment what he should do; came to a decision; and dashed impetuously forward very much as Nelson was doing. His risk, if anything, was greater; for there was at the head of his line no fiery nucleus as there was in the windward squadron. But Collingwood stayed not to think of this. Indeed of his own doing he increased his peril. His fifteen ships were to be matched with the enemy's rearmost twelve. He steered for the *Fougueux*. She was in a sense twelfth from the tail. But there were three of Gravina's to leeward. And when he came near enough to see that the ship ahead of the *Fougueux* was a Spanish flag-ship and a three-decker Collingwood found her attraction too alluring. So he steered instead for the *Santa Ana* and in so doing matched his fifteen sail not with twelve ships but sixteen. What is more, the *Royal Sovereign* was fresh from England. She was newly coppered. And when studding-sails were set and every reef shaken out she flew ahead like a frigate, leaving every one behind. This, of course, was hardly carrying out the pre-arranged scheme; not, at least, in a literal sense. Many another Commander-in-Chief would have been greatly annoyed. From the quarter-deck of the *Victory*, Nelson observed the technical disobedience. "See how that noble fellow Collingwood takes his ship into action," he said.

The *Fougueux* began the battle. She fired the first shot and as she did so Collingwood made all his men lie down on deck beside their guns. The *Fougueux* made the first defensive move. She closed up to prevent the line from being pierced. This was pointed out to Collingwood. "Steer straight for the Frenchman," he said, "and take his bowsprit." The *Fougueux* backed a topsail to prevent collision and soon after twelve o'clock the *Royal Sovereign* broke the enemy's line. "Broke" is wanting in ex-

THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR
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pressiveness here. She poured into the stern of the *Santa Ana* a double-shotted treble-shotted broadside. Mighty though her antagonist was, it shook her frame from keel to truck. "It seemed to smash everything," the Spaniards said. Fourteen guns were dismounted at the blow: and 400 men wounded or killed.

Once through the gap the *Royal Sovereign* was surrounded on all sides. No less than five of the enemy engaged her at once. There was the *Santa Ana* on one side and the *Fougueux* on another: and three other ships somewhat ahead wore round and engaged her to leeward. Yet as Collingwood set himself down to the luxury of being destroyed he exclaimed with appreciative gratitude and pride: "What would not Nelson give to be here!"

So far had he been in advance of the rest that for twenty minutes at least he was unsupported. As soon as he was through he starboarded his helm, thinking to draw up to leeward of the Spaniard. Admiral Alava had foreseen this and prepared an immense reception. When the *Royal Sovereign* received it she heeled two streaks out of the water. The *Fougueux*, too, was well placed. She bore up and raked the *Sovereign's* stern. And the three to leeward plied their shot so quickly that some of Collingwood's met them in mid-air and fell flattened into the sea. Yet the British ship fought on. Far from feeling herself outnumbered she hoped to establish a record and capture a flag from the enemy before another British ship opened fire.

In this, the greatest moment of his life, Collingwood retained his wonted calm and homely attitude. He walked the break of the poop munching an apple; or sighted a quarter-deck gun himself lest the shot should be wasted from undue excitement. In the very thick of the fray a top-gallant studding-sail came down and lay hanging over the hammocks. Collingwood summoned Clavell to his side and with his assistance folded it. Then he placed it carefully in one of the boats. It might be wanted another day, he said; and, if left, would have fallen overboard.* Meanwhile the number of wounded mounted quickly. Among others the Master

* "Old Cuddie's" economy of stores was a byword through the fleet. There was a story, doubtless invented, that he offered the following advice to a captain recently promoted: "Now, sir, that you command a ship of your own, I recommend you strongly to keep your tea and sugar under lock and key".

fell. Collingwood knelt beside him and supporting the wounded man's head upon his shoulder whispered to him words of comfort till assistance came. But the Master was wounded to death and knew it. He only minded dying, he faltered, because he would not be able to read about the victory in the papers. In such a bloody fray, Collingwood himself could not escape. A wound in the foot enabled him to prove that he was right about silk stockings. But with his usual modesty he omitted to mention his injury, so that the fact is not generally known.

The *Royal Sovereign* did not compass her ambition, but she drove off the *Fougueux:* and as three of her antagonists being on the opposite tack could not long retain their place she was able, by the time relief came, to devote the whole of her energies to the *Santa Ana*. The Spanish ship towered above her like a castle; but after an hour's fight the *Sovereign* knocked the mizen out of her: and at 2.15 sent fore and main by the board. Then Admiral Alava hauled down his flag and sent an officer to make submission. The Spaniard asked to what ship he surrendered. He was told, "The *Royal Sovereign*". "*The Royal Sovereign!*" he exclaimed. "Say rather 'The Royal Devil!'"

It might be supposed from the nature of his attack that Collingwood had entirely changed the office of his squadron and their method of engaging as prescribed by Nelson. This would be an entirely wrong impression. His leadership supplied all that was necessary. By his early signal he showed that he required the "Line Abreast". By rushing ahead he intimated plainly that the need for instant engagement must not be sacrificed to the trimmings of picturesque symmetry. In the "Nelson Touch" there was a special clause for the bewildered. "In case signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood *no captain can do wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy.*" But Collingwood's captains were not bewildered. They never doubted what they had to do. An accidental circumstance assisted them. Just about the time that Villeneuve hove to, the wind backed from north-west to west and caused the enemy's line to sag in the centre. Their formation presented in Collingwood's words "a crescent convexing to leeward". In consequence all their rearmost ships were abaft the *Sovereign's* beam and handy to come to for those that followed her. In his dispatch Collingwood is careful to say that

the ships succeeding him broke through the line at all parts. And the net result may be gauged from two very eloquent facts. Nine of his fifteen ships, no less, were engaged within half an hour of the firing of the *Fougueux's* opening broadside. And the *Revenge*, ninth ship in the order, was at work within ten minutes of the *Sovereign*, although for double that length of time the *Sovereign* fought alone and unsupported.

The ship that came to Collingwood's aid was the *Belleisle*. She was a fast ship. Earlier in the day she had been ordered ahead to serve as second to the Admiral. She passed the *Tonnant* on her way. "A glorious day for Old England," her captain called out. "We shall have one apiece before night." The *Belleisle* played a magnificent part in the hottest of the battle. At one time or another she was engaged by eight or nine of the enemy; the *Santa Ana*, the *Fougueux*, the three that were round upon the *Sovereign* and others that came up from astern. She and she alone of the British fleet was reduced to a sheer hulk. She lost her mizen, her main, her fore and her bowsprit. But she nailed one flag to the stump of a mast, while another was fastened to a handspike and waved continuously. In time relief came to her. The *Swiftsure* and the *Defiance* raced each other to bring it: and as one of them went ahead, the other one cheered her on.

The *Belleisle* was battered and bruised and crushed: but she had her one before night!

It would have been strange if the old *Bellerophon* had not found a warm corner somewhere. The "Ruffians" wrote "Death or Glory" on their guns and went to look for it. Collingwood's signals were acknowledged by John Franklin, afterwards known to all the world as the heroic Arctic explorer. The warm corner was found: and the Captain killed. But the ship was splendidly fought by Lieutenant Cumby, author of that travesty the "Image of Blue and Gold". The *Bellerophon* snuggled herself cosily into a nest of five furious foes. She fought them alone as long as she could, and when assisted captured two of them.

And yet neither *Belleisle* nor *Bellerophon* had the longest casualty list: but the *Colossus*.

It is evident that Collingwood's mode of attack brought the ships into action not altogether as in line abreast, nor one after the other, as in line ahead. Those that were fastest were in

action first and, according to the text-books, should have been overwhelmed by numbers. Thanks to the spirit of Nelson that animated them they were not overwhelmed, and their slower comrades pressing on behind were enabled by hunting in twos and threes to rectify the swinging balance; to bring help where help was sorest needed or complete a conquest that hung in doubt.

. . . . . .

It was part of the gigantic task that Nelson set himself to pierce the very heart of the enemy, to take Villeneuve, to put the *Bucentaure* out of action, and so paralyse initiative in the combined fleet. But as he bore down, the enemy showed no colours. It was impossible to guess which the flagship was. Therefore at first he made for his old acquaintance the *Santissima Trinidad*. She at least was unmistakable. When, however, the *Fougueux* opened fire the enemy broke their flags at the masthead and the *Bucentaure* stood revealed. Here, then, was the mark for Nelson. Without hesitation he ported his helm and steered for the little gap that showed between the Spanish flagship and the French.

Already as she moved into range the *Victory* had drawn upon herself such a fire as never battleship before sustained. The enemy, by single shots, early finding her distance, proceeded to discharge a very deluge, enfilading her without compunction as she coolly chose her point of attack. At 500 yards her mizen topmast went. A minute later her wheel was knocked to pieces. Nelson steered the ship from the gunroom and proceeded slowly and silently. A double-headed shot killed eight marines on the poop. He distributed the rest at intervals: and so onwards without reply. The foresail was slashed to ribbons. The fore top-sail was like nothing so much as a grating. Still the *Victory* fired not a round. Her studding-sails were shorn away. Fifty men fell on her upper deck. And still without answer she moved on: so silent, there might have been no soul on board. In all his experience, Nelson said, he had never seen ship's company under such self-control. To the enemy the *Victory* seemed like some phantom, unassailable by mortal men; the mute, slow-footed minister of Fate.

Villeneuve strove valiantly to save his line. He pushed up the *Bucentaure* upon the starboard quarter of the *Trinidad* locking

the two links of his chain. It was impossible to drive a wedge between. So the *Victory* turned on the opposite tack, exploring the avenue of fire. As Hardy and Nelson paced the quarter-deck a shot passed between them and a splinter bruised Hardy's foot and tore the buckle from his shoe. Each looked anxious for a moment, thinking the other wounded. "This is too warm work to last long," said Nelson.

Villeneuve's second astern, the *Neptune*, was out of her station, but the *Redoutable* pushed up so near that her bowsprit touched the *Bucentaure's* taffrail. Even here, then, there was no passage: not, at least, Hardy remarked, without a collision. "I cannot help that," said Nelson: "go on board which you please. Take your choice."

So they put the helm over to starboard and passed under Villeneuve's stern at grazing-distance.

Then at last the *Victory* spoke.

First she discharged from her fo'c'sle a 68-pounder carronade slap into the *Bucentaure's* stern windows. The horrible weapon, loaded with a keg of 500 musket bullets, belched forth death along the decks. And then each gun of the *Victory's* broadside just as it came into position was discharged with rhythmical accuracy into the very weakest point of the doomed French flag-ship. Not one missed her mark. The effect was staggering. More than 400 men and twenty guns took no further part in the fight.

It was Nelson's intention to engage the *Bucentaure* from to-leeward until she submitted. But this design was frustrated by the *Redoutable*, who fouled the *Victory* the moment she was through. The *Redoutable* was burning to fight; but her captain, Lucas, knew better than to match his ship with Nelson's in an artillery duel. He let down his lower-deck port-lids. He put his picked men in his tops. And as the *Victory* with guns below tore her opponent to pieces, the picked men emptied her upper deck with langridge, musketry and hand-grenades. They emptied the poop, swept the gangways, cleared the fo'c'sle, and save for the towering figure of Hardy left scarce an officer untouched. Among the first the Admiral sank in his blood to the deck.

Lucas, of the *Redoutable*, now resolved to carry the *Victory* by boarding. For a time he was balked by the chasm that gaped between the ships as they ground their channels together. But he

cut the supports of the mainyard and used the spar as a bridge. Over this perilous aerial causeway his men made a rush, clinging and swarming and scrambling and pushing. Now with a shout of triumph one would drop on the *Victory's* deck : now with a howl of rage one would miss his footing and plunge into the abyss. On they came and Hardy was compelled to call men from the gun-decks to repel them. A fierce battle took place about the bulwarks. Blood flowed freely. Many were killed on either side. And then, just at the psychological moment, the unexpected happened.

The *Temeraire* had followed very close astern of the *Victory*. Her courses, like the *Victory's*, had been riddled, and in breaking the line she was raked by the French *Neptune*.* So serious was her damage that it brought her to a premature standstill : a sad plight surely and grievous for the hardest hitter in the fleet. But as she waited, the *Redoutable*, clutched by and clutching the *Victory*, unconscious of all but the effort to board, bore down on her larboard beam. The Frenchman's bowsprit passed over her gangway, and the *Temeraire*, blessing the good chance, lashed it firmly to her own main rigging. Then having tucked her adversary's head thus firmly under her arm, she lashed out with all her larboard guns for victory, vengeance and Nelson. There was the most hideous crash, and it was as if all had come down at once, masts and ropes and spars and rigging and sails and blocks and flags.

Yet praise where praise is due! The *Redoutable* fought as splendidly as ever fought ship at sea. She was but a seventy-four. She was fighting now with two of England's noblest first-rates. The *Victory* lost her mizen ; the *Temeraire* all her topmasts : but the *Redoutable* lost her main, her mizen, her foretop, her bowsprit, and rudder. The *Victory* and *Temeraire* lost in all 282 men. This figure was equal to the total loss of all the rest of the squadron together. But the *Redoutable*, out of 643 men lost 522. Little wonder that Napoleon conferred upon Lucas the cross of the Legion of Honour.

While the *Temeraire* was reducing the *Redoutable*, a new fighter crept cunningly upon the scene. This was the *Fougueux*. She

* Each nationality had a *Neptune* at Trafalgar; English, French and Spanish.

had already played a prominent part in the battle round Collingwood. Now passing from rear to van she espied fresh chance of mischief. The *Temeraire*, fully engaged on one side, was completely exposed on the other. It was the work of a moment to call away boarders and distribute small arms from the lockers. All was soon ready: and the eager spirits sprang into the rigging. There was no sign that the *Temeraire* suspected.

Suspected! Captain Harvey was waiting for them! He had manned and loaded his starboard guns and prepared a special reception. The *Fougueux* came up with ringing cries of "Vive L'Empereur!" "A l'abordage!" But Captain Harvey lifted his hand. "Stand by 'Temeraires'! Now, —— fire!" One blow was enough. They lashed the *Fougueux* to their spare anchor as they had lashed the *Redoutable*. Twenty-nine "Temeraires" boarded the *Fougueux* and hauled Britain's colours aloft. Then they turned again to the *Redoutable* and finding a pathway over her wreckage hauled her flag down as well. This done with a prize under either arm, not merely taken but shackled in handcuffs, the *Temeraire* looked about for other victims and opened what guns she could squeeze into action on the *Santissima Trinidad*.

Oh! to see the linstock lighting,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
Oh! to hear the round shot biting,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
Oh! to see the linstock lighting,
And to hear the round shot biting,
For we're all in love with fighting,
On the *Fighting Téméraire.**

The *Bucentaure* and her seconds fought with desperate gallantry; not merely because they were gallant and brave, nor because the Emperor expected it. To prevent their line from being broken they made their extraordinary rally. They strained and struggled; struggled and strained. They succeeded in their self-appointed task. Their line was not broken as De Grasse's was in 1782. But then Nelson's plan was not what they conceived. He cared

* The grand old ship having done all that she could was in 1838 sold out of the service to be broken up. Happily, as she was tugged to her last berth, she was seen on an autumn evening in the Thames by J. M. W. Turner and inspired the picture which has made at least her name familiar.

not a pin for breaking their line in symmetrical line ahead. His only plan was to conceal his plan: that in so doing he might take their Commander-in-Chief; secure Collingwood from interruption; and mass the whole of his twenty-seven ships on but twenty-two of their own.

It is needless to say that he did all that he desired. Under the open vault of heaven, in full view of the foe he kept his projects as darkly hidden as ever General with valleys and forest and hills; rivers, marshes and rising ground. And all his expected consequences followed to a nicety.

The vessels astern of the *Temeraire* completed their leader's work. They entirely neglected their enemy's van and hurled themselves with crushing force upon his centre. The *Neptune* was third of Nelson's first-rates. Captain Fremantle, her commander, a veteran of Teneriffe, first gave the *Bucentaure* her *coup de grace* and leaving her to surrender to Captain Pellew of the *Conqueror*,* pushed on to the *Trinidad*. Here he found the *Africa* who had lost touch with the fleet on the previous night. Fearing what Nelson would think of her, the penitent had passed from the extreme north of the battlefield and receiving the fire of ship after ship had ended by challenging the only four-decker afloat, though herself a wee sixty-four. Others came up in time to complete the conquest, and when Captain Codrington of the *Orion* worked his way to the front the hostile centre had ceased to exist. Therefore, with a wisdom that in after years found a completer phrase at Navarino, he turned his ship to Collingwood's side to finish the business there.

THE DEATH OF NELSON†

Thank God, I have done my duty.

"Lord Nelson was walking the quarter-deck with Captain Hardy and in the act of turning near the hatchway with his face

* Villeneuve would have shifted his flag, but there was not a boat left. There was not a mast left either, nor yet an officer on the quarter-deck except himself.

† The account given here (slightly abridged) is from the AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE of Dr. Beatty, Surgeon to the *Victory*. His book was first published in 1807, and provides the *only* incontestable evidence upon the closing scene in the cockpit.

towards the stern of the *Victory*, when the fatal ball was fired from the enemy's mizen top.* The ball struck the epaulette on his left shoulder, and penetrated his chest. He fell with his face on the deck.

"Captain Hardy expressed a hope that he was not severely wounded, to which the gallant Chief replied: 'They have done for me at last, Hardy'.

"'I hope not,' answered Captain Hardy.

"'Yes,' replied his Lordship, 'my backbone is shot through.'

"Captain Hardy ordered the seamen to carry the Admiral to the Cockpit. While the men were carrying him down the ladder from the middle deck, his Lordship observed that the tiller ropes were not yet replaced, and desired one of the Midshipmen to go upon the quarter-deck and remind Captain Hardy that new ones should be immediately rove. Having delivered this order, he took his handkerchief from his pocket and covered his face with it, that he might be conveyed to the Cockpit at this crisis unnoticed by the crew.

"The Surgeon had just examined two officers and found that they were dead, when his attention was arrested by several of the wounded calling to him, 'Mr. Beatty, Lord Nelson is here: Mr. Beatty, the Admiral is wounded'.

"The Surgeon, on looking round, saw the handkerchief fall from his Lordship's face; when the stars on his coat, which also had been covered by it, appeared. Mr. Burke, the purser, and the Surgeon ran immediately to the assistance of his Lordship; and took him from the arms of the Seamen who had carried him below. In conveying him to one of the Midshipmen's berths, they stumbled, but recovered themselves without falling.

"His Lordship was laid upon a bed, stripped of his clothes, and covered with a sheet.

"The Surgeon then examined the wound, assuring his Lordship that he would not put him to much pain in endeavouring to discover the course of the ball; which he soon found had penetrated deep into the chest, and had probably lodged in the spine.

* After Nelson had left the deck a midshipman called Pollard, stationed on the *Victory's* poop, picked up a musket and with steady and deliberate aim emptied the *Redoutable's* mizen top. The last man attempted to descend but Pollard picked him off in the rigging.

This being explained to his Lordship, he replied, 'he was confident his back was shot through'. The back was then examined externally but without any injury being perceived; on which his Lordship was requested by the Surgeon to make him acquainted with all his sensations. He replied, that 'he felt a gush of blood every minute within his breast: that he had no feeling in the lower part of his body: and that his breathing was difficult and attended with very severe pain about that part of the spine where he was confident that the ball had struck: for,' said he, 'I felt it break my back'.

"These symptoms, but more particularly the gush of blood which his Lordship complained of, together with the state of his pulse, indicated to the Surgeon the hopeless situation of the case; but till after the victory was ascertained and announced to his Lordship, the true nature of his wound was concealed by the Surgeon from all on board except only Captain Hardy.*

"Many messages were sent to Captain Hardy by the Surgeon, requesting his attendance on his Lordship; who became impatient to see him, and often exclaimed: 'Will no one bring Hardy to me? He must be killed. He is surely destroyed.'

"The Captain's aide-de-camp, Mr. Bulkley, came below and stated that 'circumstances respecting the fleet required Captain Hardy's presence on deck; but that he would avail himself of the first favourable moment to visit his Lordship'.

"An hour and ten minutes however elapsed from the time of his Lordship's being wounded, before Captain Hardy's first subsequent interview with him; the particulars of which are nearly as follow.

"They shook hands affectionately, and Lord Nelson said: 'Well, Hardy, how goes the battle? How goes the day with us?'

"'Very well, my Lord,' replied Captain Hardy. 'We have

* The ball struck the fore part of the epaulette and entered the left shoulder. It grazed the shoulder-blade, fractured the second and third ribs and in passing through the lung severed a branch of the artery. Then it fractured the backbone in two places, wounded the spinal cord and lodged in the muscles of the back. On removing the ball a portion of the gold lace and pad of the epaulette together with a scrap of the coat were found firmly attached to it as if inserted into the metal in a state of fusion. Under the injury done to his back, Nelson might have lived two or three days, but the severed artery hastened his death by internal hæmorrhage.

got twelve or fourteen of the enemy's ships in our possession; but five of their van have tacked, and show an intention of bearing down upon the *Victory*. I have therefore called two or three of our fresh ships round us, and have no doubt of giving them a drubbing.'

"'I hope,' said his Lordship, 'none of *our* ships have struck, Hardy.'

"'No, my Lord,' replied Captain Hardy; 'there is no fear of that.'

"Lord Nelson then said: 'I am a dead man, Hardy. I am going fast; it will be all over with me soon. Come nearer to me . . .' Mr. Burke was about to withdraw at the commencement of this conversation; but his Lordship, perceiving his intention, desired he would remain.

"Captain Hardy observed, that 'he hoped Mr. Beatty could yet hold out some prospect of life'.

"'Oh! no!' answered his Lordship; 'it is impossible. My back is shot through. Beatty will tell you so.'

"Captain Hardy then returned on deck, and at parting shook hands again with his revered friend and Commander.

"His Lordship now requested the Surgeon to return to the wounded; and give his assistance to such of them as he could be useful to; 'for,' said he, 'you can do nothing for me'.

"The Surgeon replied: 'My Lord, unhappily for our Country, nothing can be done for you;' and having made this declaration he was so much affected, that he turned round and withdrew a few steps to conceal his emotions.

"His Lordship said: 'I know it. I feel something rising in my breast,' putting his hand on his left side, 'which tells me I am gone.' Drink was recommended liberally, and Dr. Scott and Mr. Burke fanned him with paper.

"He often exclaimed, 'God be praised, I have done my duty'; and upon the Surgeon's inquiring whether his pain was still very great, he declared, 'it continued so very severe, that he wished he was dead. Yet,' said he in a lower voice, 'one would like to live a little longer, too.'

"Captain Hardy now came to the Cockpit to see his Lordship a second time, which was after an interval of about fifty minutes from the conclusion of his first visit.

"Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy shook hands again: and while the Captain retained his Lordship's hand, he congratulated him even in the arms of Death on his brilliant victory; 'which,' he said, 'was complete;' though he did not know how many of the Enemy were captured, as it was impossible to perceive every ship distinctly. He was certain, however, of fourteen or fifteen having surrendered.

"His Lordship answered, 'That is well, but I bargained for twenty': and then emphatically exclaimed, '*Anchor*, Hardy; *anchor!*'

"To this the Captain replied, 'I suppose, my Lord, Admiral Collingwood will now take upon himself the direction of affairs'. *

"'Not while I live, I hope, Hardy!' cried the dying Chief; and at that moment endeavoured ineffectually to raise himself from the bed.

"'No,' added he; 'do *you* anchor, Hardy.'

"Captain Hardy then said: 'Shall *we* make the Signal, Sir?'

"'Yes,' answered his Lordship; 'for if I live, I'll anchor.'

"He then told Captain Hardy, 'he felt that in a few minutes he should be no more'; adding in a low tone, 'but don't throw me overboard, Hardy'.

"The Captain answered: 'Oh! no, certainly not'.

"'Then,' replied his Lordship, 'you know what to do: and,' continued he, 'take care of my dear Lady Hamilton, Hardy; take care of poor Lady Hamilton. Kiss me, Hardy.'

"The Captain now knelt down, and kissed his cheek; when his Lordship said, 'Now I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done by duty.'

"Captain Hardy stood for a minute or two in silent contemplation: he then knelt down again and kissed his Lordship's forehead.

"His Lordship said: 'Who is that?'

"The Captain answered, 'It is Hardy': to which his Lordship replied, 'God bless you, Hardy!'

"After this affecting scene Captain Hardy withdrew, and re-

* As soon as he was wounded Nelson instructed a messenger to give Admiral Collingwood his love and to say that he was wounded but not dangerously. Collingwood always used to declare that the man's "face" blurted out the truth.

turned to the quarter-deck: having spent about eight minutes in this his last interview with his dying friend.*

"His Lordship's thirst now increased: and he called for 'Drink, drink,' 'Fan, fan!' and 'Rub, rub!' addressing himself in the last call to Dr. Scott, who had been rubbing his breast with his hand, from which he found some relief. These words he spoke in a very rapid manner, which rendered his articulation difficult: but he every now and then, with evident increase of pain, made a greater effort with his vocal powers, and pronounced distinctly these last words: 'Thank God, I have done my duty;' and this great sentiment he continued to repeat as long as he was able to give it utterance.

"His Lordship became speechless in about fifteen minutes after Captain Hardy left him. Dr. Scott and Mr. Burke, who had all along sustained the bed under his shoulders, forbore to disturb him by speaking to him; and when he had remained speechless about five minutes, his Lordship's Steward went to the Surgeon, and stated his apprehensions that his Lordship was dying. The Surgeon immediately repaired to him, and knelt down by his side, and took up his hand; which was cold, and the pulse gone from the wrist.

"On the Surgeon's feeling his forehead, which was likewise cold, his Lordship opened his eyes, looked up, and shut them again."

. . . . . .

EXTRACT FROM THE *VICTORY'S* LOG.

Partial firing continued until 4.30 P.M., *when a victory having been reported to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Nelson, he then died of his wound.*

FINALE

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz bay;
Bluish mid the burning water full in face Trafalgar lay.†

—BROWNING.

"Five of their van have tacked and show an intention of bear-

* Hardy survived the battle for thirty-four years. At his death they found round his neck a miniature of Nelson which he had worn night and day ever since.

† Trafalgar means the "Cape of Laurels".

ing down upon the *Victory*." Such was the news that Hardy brought to the cockpit. By "their van" he referred to the ten leading ships which had been left out of the combat altogether. Nelson had calculated that they could not return without undue delay; and that delay would ruin them. His anticipations were exactly fulfilled. The light air and the rolling swell made it very difficult for them to go about. They would never have gone about at all without the aid of their boats. And when they did at last go about it was three o'clock and the battle was almost ended.

Still for all that they were a compact band, and their numbers should have enabled them to influence the result. But they did not influence the result. They did not know what to do. They ceased to remain a compact band. They broke up into three insignificant fragments. One, the *Intrépide*, with a gallantry worthy of the finest records of the sea, dashed to the help of Villeneuve. She plunged into a tangle of Britishers. It was magnificent; but unavailing. Codrington, who seems on this afternoon to have been everywhere at once, brought his fire to bear on her, and after that there was nothing more to be said. But Captain Infernet of the *Intrépide* would have fought while a soul remained alive. Ten Frenchmen had to hold him down while they made surrender of his ship. Of the other nine sail four fell away to leeward playing a sorry part. They eventually arrived at Cadiz. The remaining five rallied round the flag of Dumanoir, their proper Admiral, and came on in a business-like way. These were the five to which Hardy referred. They made for the stricken *Victory*, and for a moment the position was critical. But the last two ships of Nelson's column saw the danger. One of them was the *Minotaur* who had helped the *Vanguard* at the Nile. She and the *Spartiate*, acting as a reserve, fought Dumanoir by themselves. Standing eastward in line ahead, they raked the five as they approached: and they fought them till help came; fought them till the last French hope was gone; and Dumanoir (with only four ships now) disappeared from the field.

So the battle ended.

Of the six flag-officers who commanded the Allied Fleet, one had been kept out of the battle till too late. Two, including the

noble Gravina,* were mortally wounded. Three, including the Commander-in-Chief, were prisoners in British hands. In itself, this was sufficient to make Trafalgar remarkable. But it was not by any means all. The British casualties have been called heavy. They were heavy. They were bound to be heavy when all exposed themselves so fearlessly. Of dead and wounded there were 1,663. But the enemy at the lowest estimate lost 14,000 men and of these the greater part perished.

And round the *Victory* were the twenty prizes that Nelson had bargained for: twenty ships, two-thirds of the combined fleet, taken from an enemy with the advantage of numbers, taken from an enemy with the advantage of position, taken from an enemy of acknowledged skill and unshaken gallantry. Of the thirty-three proud ships that had ventured from Cadiz, a wretched remnant remained: and Dumanoir's four stretched away to the north seeking a haven in vain.†

* Gravina reached home and died in the arms of his brother, the Archbishop of Nicæa. "I die happy," he said at last. "I am going to join Nelson, the greatest hero the world has produced."

† Nelson's "Anchor, Hardy; Anchor!" was prophetic of a coming storm. The storm came and under the lee of the broken ships were the Trafalgar shoals and the entrance to Cadiz. The storm rose in violence to a hurricane and raged for four long days. Yet the Britons budged not. They rode out the gale; lost not a ship. To the Spaniards there was something in this more marvellous than the actual battle. Britons, however, have withheld their admiration: and wondered less that their own ships were saved than that the prizes were allowed to founder. As if their destruction were due to an oversight or some sleepy carelessness somewhere! Collingwood did all that was humanly possible; but he could not in an hour on the open sea re-equip a fleet of wrecks or man them with British seamen. From the first the prizes had a provoking way of finding their own way home. Three of them drifted of their own accord right into Cadiz. A brave French captain put out with a squadron to accelerate this welcome process. He rescued two more—the *Santa Ana* and one other. But the game was too hazardous. The British accounted for four of his force and raised their score again to nineteen. Of these only the *Swiftsure*, *Bahama*, *Ildefonso* and *Nepomuceno* reached an English harbour. Of the rest, one perished by fire upon the battlefield. One, the famous *Redoutable*, wounded below the water-line, sank while towed by her captors. Nine, including the *Bucentaure* and *Fougueux*, were wrecked and cast away. The remaining four were destroyed: scuttled (like the *Trinidad*) or burned (like the *Intrépide*). Of the vessels at Cadiz one reached harbour in a sinking condition: five were complete wrecks. None of them ever again saw service at sea. Dumanoir's four did their best to reach

Never before had such a result been achieved. In no pitched battle by sea, not even in the bloody encounters of Duncan and Albemarle, had 60 per cent. of the enemy's force ever before been captured. In this respect let but the battle of Trafalgar be set beside La Hogue, or The Saints, or the Glorious First of June. And the magnitude of the conquest was due not to lust of blood as in the battles of Genghiz or Attila, not to lust of ambition as in Napoleon's. For himself there was no need of further victory: Nelson had already scaled the highest pinnacles of fame. The fight was fought and the victory gained because the greatest of her sons still loved England better than all. The sacrifice of his life, while life was sweet to him, was the noblest thing that Europe had seen for a thousand years and more.

Napoleon, the giant of warfare, defeated the Austrians not once or twice. He defeated them at Marengo. He defeated them decisively at Austerlitz. They fought him once more and were crushed at Wagram only to rise and foil him at Leipsic. But neither French nor Spanish rose again to challenge the verdict of Trafalgar. It was final, absolute; a judgment without appeal. Henceforth upon the ocean there was no voice nor any that answered. Trafalgar was the most decisive battle fought in Napoleon's lifetime, and it proved, as Macaulay says, that the naval power of Britain was to Napoleon what a stream of running water was to a witch. It set the bounds to his influence. It circumscribed his power. He might still terrorize Europe, but he could not dominate the world. For long he would not believe it. For ten years he struggled against it. But his acknowledgment, if tardy, came at last. It came on a July day in 1815 when at Rochefort the Emperor abandoned his hope of escaping to America. "Wherever there is water to float a ship," he said, "we are sure to find you English in the way": and he yielded himself to the *Bellerophon;* the *Bellerophon*, earliest in action on the Glorious First of June, the *Bellerophon*, the pride of the Nile,

Rochefort. But on 4th November they were captured *en masse* by Sir Richard Strachan who had taken up the blockade. This fine piece of work brought in another Admiral and raised the net takings to twenty-three of the line or 70 per cent. of the whole force engaged. The gross takings were 85 per cent. One of Dumanoir's squadron, the *Duguay-Trouin*, was rechristened *Implacable* and served until 1905 as a training ship at Devonport.

the "Death or glory" of Trafalgar, the rare old "Billy Ruff'n" of the tars.

Like a great edifice or mountain Trafalgar is best seen from a distance. Pitt, a few months afterwards, died of a broken heart. And the lesser men of 1805, unable otherwise to explain its importance, invented a legend which ascribed to the battle their deliverance from invasion. But the men of 1905 found the proper perspective. From their view-point they saw that Nelson's masterpiece had enabled their empire to grow upon the sea for a hundred years unchallenged.

That Collingwood, the master of style, should write the Trafalgar dispatches was appropriate enough. His letter "moves with the dignity of an anthem, and gives the glory to God, not to man". But his first thought is for Nelson. "My heart is rent with the most poignant grief for the death of a friend, to whom I was bound by the strongest ties of affection; a grief to which even the glorious occasion in which he fell does not bring the consolation which perhaps it ought."*

For every one it was the same, rich and poor, gentle and simple, admiral and seaman; the surpassing splendour of the victory was quenched in the news of Nelson's death. One who died towards the close of the nineteenth century recalled, as the most vivid impression of a long life, a childish memory. The church bells had been pealing and dancing with glee, swinging high and low like a

* Perhaps the saddest thing in Collingwood's life was the refusal of the Government to allow him to return after the great battle. He yearned for home, to see again the faces he loved so well, and the garden and the copses and the smoke of his own fire. But the Government were nervous; felt safe only while he was at sea. So at sea he stayed, year after year; eating his heart out and saying no word. It mattered little to him that they raised him to the peerage. He cared nothing for titles. He wanted to come home. Sickness came upon him and still he sailed the weary seas, seeking for a foe that dared not face him. His officers took him ashore, but nothing could be done for him. So they carried him on board again and made for Gibraltar. He was told he was at sea. "Then I may yet live to fight the French once more," he said, and dropped into a reverie. Towards the end he rallied and amazed even those who knew him best by the sweet calm of his death-bed. Without a sigh of regret, a murmur of pain, or a trace of fear he passed into the presence of the God whom he had served in faith and meekness through every hour of an unsullied career (7th March, 1810). His body was carried home and laid as was meet by Nelson's side.

wedding-chime. It was impossible to miss the infection of their merriment. Then quite suddenly they stopped. Stopped; and with solemn boom came the muffled monotone, the dull clang of the passing bell. Toll! Toll! The presage of gloom and woe and misery. "Have you heard the BAD news?" asked the turnpike keeper. "We have taken twenty ships, but—we have lost Lord Nelson." He brushed a tear away with his sleeve.

And here are the words of a simple jack-tar, one of the "Royal Sovereigns". They are taken from a letter written to his friends immediately after the battle.

"Our dear Admiral Nelson is killed! So we have paid pretty sharply for licking 'em. I never set eyes on him, for which I am both sorry and glad; for, to be sure, I should like to have seen him—but then, all the men in our ship who have seen him are such soft toads, they have done nothing but blast their eyes and cry, ever since he was killed. God bless you! chaps that fought like the devil, sit down and cry like a wench."

Nelson's body was placed in a temporary coffin filled with brandy, camphor and myrrh. The *Victory*, with drooping flags, carried her master home, and in December dropped anchor in the Thames. On the 22nd a yacht came alongside and receiving her burden passed up the river. Minute guns were fired, and both banks were lined with troops. The bells tolled and the bands played solemn music. At Greenwich the aged Lord Hood, who had befriended the hero in the flower of his age, now received his mortal remains. They lay in state from the 4th to the 8th of January, and hundreds of thousands of Londoners passed through the Painted Hall to pay their last tribute of affection. On the 8th a state-barge and many boats set forth from Greenwich. The Lord Mayor attended and many distinguished naval officers. At Whitehall Stairs, the body was received by Norroy King of Arms and nine heralds and pursuivants. It was carried thence to the Admiralty in a violent south-westerly gale.

On the 9th was the funeral. Nothing was lacking that could add impressiveness to the scene. Fourteen thousand pounds were spent; for here was a very king of men and royally they

buried him.* The Prince of Wales and his brothers attended. The Scots Greys led. Other regiments followed. Then came the throb of the music and the rattle of gun-carriages. Then lines of carriages with the peers of the realm; Garter King at Arms, heralds, pursuivants, Greenwich pensioners, Yeomen of the Guard and Grenadiers. The coffin, one of the most magnificent ever made, was drawn on a car, shaped front and back to represent the *Victory*. Over it four palm-trees supported a canopy that bore Nelson's motto. Sir Peter Parker, his earliest friend, followed as chief mourner, and with him were thirty Admirals and more than a hundred Captains. So they passed through a bare-headed crowd that stretched from Whitehall to Ludgate Hill. It was a gorgeous cavalcade; but what touched the heart of the spectators more than all, was the sight of the *Victory's* men. They carried aloft their Nelson's flag pierced and riddled with bullet-holes in every crevice and crease.

The service in the cathedral was not concluded till late afternoon. Daylight faded and torches were brought. And when the music was hushed, there was a sound unusual in so vast a building—the sound of a multitude weeping. So they laid him to rest, the greatest sailor, the perfect seaman who combined in one all the qualities of all the Sea Kings, the piety of Duncan, the humanity of Howe, the grand eye for a battlefield of Rodney and Albemarle; the courtliness and charm of Keppel, the wit and high spirits of Drake, the motherly care of Anson for his men, the subtlety of Hood, the dash of Hawke, the wanton bravery of Benbow and Grenville, and the flame-pure patriotism of Blake. They laid him to rest, and as the body descended the men of the *Victory*, controlling themselves no longer, dashed at the flag that covered the coffin and tore it to shreds for a remembrance of him † And there "in London's central roar"

* Posthumous honours also were paid. Nelson's brother William was created an Earl; a pension of £5,000 to support the title was granted in perpetuity; and a sum of £120,000 was set aside with which was purchased the estate of Downton near Salisbury, known to-day as Trafalgar.

† According to a pretty legend, two distinctive marks of the bluejacket's uniform were adopted to commemorate Nelson: the black silk neckerchief as a memory of his death and the three lines of braid upon the collar to recall his three great victories.

the hero of heroes lies, under the very dome of St. Paul's sleeping his last sleep peacefully. But his spirit lives; and living, tells of the fight well fought, the pain endured, the duty nobly done.

Ever the faith endures,
England, my England:—
"Take and break us: we are yours,
England my own!
Life is good and joy runs high
Between English earth and sky:
Death is death: but we shall die
To the song on your bugles blown,
England—
To the stars on your bugles blown!"

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[An asterisk (*) has been set against the names of sailors whose portraits may be seen in the National Portrait Gallery, and a blind P (¶) against the names of those whose pictures are hung in the Painted Hall at Greenwich.]

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*Keppel, Augustus, Viscount (1725-86), accompanies Anson round the world in the *Centurion*, 1 ; and distinguishes himself in the fight with the *Cavadonga*, 1 ; serves with Boscawen in the *Dreadnought*, 1 ; and at twenty-four hoists the broad pendant and conducts a mission to Algiers, 1-2 ; in the Seven Years' War serves under Hawke at Rochefort, 2 ; and accompanies him to the Basque Roads, 1758, 2 ; left in charge to blockade the Gironde, 2 ; and finds fresh opportunity for distinction, 2 ; at Quiberon sinks the *Thésée*, 2 ; shares with Howe the regard of Hawke, 1 ; and carries

on the master's tradition, 10, 11, 12; in 1761 captures Belleisle, 3; and in 1762 serves as second to Pocock at Havana, 4; his skill in capturing the Moro, 5; secures him a fortune and flag-rank, 5; opposed in politics to George III and his "Friends," 8; but in the crisis of 1778 accepts command of the Channel, 9; and in preparing a fleet is hampered at every turn, 9; by the maladministration of Lord Sandwich, 7; engages the French off Ushant, 27 July, 1778, 10; but is denied complete success, 15-16; by the adroitness of his adversary, 11-15; and the extraordinary behaviour of Sir H. Palliser, 14; refrains from censure, 15; but on his return is charged with misconduct, 17; and tried by court martial, 18; defends himself, 20; and to the boundless joy of the country, 23; is honourably acquitted, 21; refuses to serve again under Lord Sandwich, 23; and is followed into retirement by Howe, 125-6; Barrington, 51; Hyde Parker, 71 n.; and almost all officers of distinction, 24 and n.; on the fall of Lord North becomes First Lord of the Admiralty, 31; and is created a Viscount, 31; abolishes the 42-pounder gun, 32; introduces the Carronade, 32-3; and orders all ships to be coppered, 33; a commander of great ability, 2, 3, 5, 10, 14, 21, 225; made the plaything of political dissension, 6, 7, 17, 22; his genius must be studied in the work of his disciples, 42; especially Jervis, 235-43; and Duncan, 191-5; a man of singular charm, 1, 15, 33; and almost universal popularity, 9, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23.
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*¶Nelson, Horatio, Viscount (1758-1805), born at Burnham Thorpe, 202; and educated at Norwich and North Walsham, 203; in 1770 enters the Navy, 203; as Captain's servant to his uncle Maurice Suckling, 202-3; from whom he receives instruction in

seamanship, 204; and navigation, 204; accompanies an expedition to the Arctic regions, 204-5; and to India, 205; invalided home from the East he receives a commission, 205; and is appointed to the *Lowestoft*, 1777, 205; boards a prize in a storm, 206; and is honourably mentioned to Sir Peter Parker, 206; by whom he is appointed to his first ship, the gun-brig *Badger*, 1778, 206; rescues the crew of a burning ship, 206; and is made post into the frigate *Hinchinbrook*, 1779, 206; escorts an expedition to Nicaragua, 207; and ascends the river San Juan with the soldiers, 207; returns to Jamaica more dead than alive, 1780, 207; but is nursed by Lady Parker, 207; and Cornwallis, 208; re-establishing his health at Bath, 208; he receives command of the frigate *Albemarle*, 1781, 208; in which he visits the Baltic, 209; and North America, 209; he meets Lord Hood, 1782, 209; and becomes his disciple, 210; by Lord Hood's influence obtains a peace appointment, 1784, 211; and puts down illegal trading in the West Indies, 211-2; does not thereby improve his chances, 212; and on his return remains on half-pay (1787-93), 213; on the outbreak of Revolutionary war is appointed to his first battleship, the *Agamemnon* (64), 214; and sails with Lord Hood to the Mediterranean, 214; greatly distinguishes himself in the capture of Corsica, 1794, 216-8; but loses the sight of his right eye, 218; much depressed by Lord Hood's retirement, 219; although appreciated by his successor, 223; conducts an audacious duel with the *Ça Ira*, 1795, 219-22; and eventually captures her, 223; welcomes the arrival of Jervis, 226; from whom he receives a broad pendant, 229; is sent to evacuate Elba, 231; and on the way captures *La Sabina*, 231; passes through the middle of the Spanish fleet, 233; and rejoins Jervis just in time for St. Vincent, 14 February, 1797, 233; greatly distinguishes himself in the battle, 238; by flinging himself in front of seven Spanish ships, 239; and capturing two of them, 240-1; receives his flag and a knighthood of the Bath, 242; serves under St. Vincent in the blockade of Cadiz, 246; is appointed to command the inshore squadron, 247; and fights a hand to hand encounter with a Spanish launch, 247; conducts an expedition to Santa Cruz, July, 1797, 248; and though debarred from all hopes of success, 248; insists on attacking, 249; and is repulsed with the loss of his arm, 250; suffers agonies from bad surgery, 253; but recovering returns to work, 254; and is given an independent command in the Mediterranean, 1798, 256; unravels the secret of Napoleon's Eastern campaign, 257-62; and annihilates his fleet at the battle of the Nile, 1 August, 1798, 264-78; receives countless gifts, 279; and is created a peer, 279; not allowed to come home (1798-1800), 280, 284; but co-operates with Naples against France, 280; and carries the King and Queen into safety in Sicily, 280; until he is enabled to set them securely on their throne, 281; is created by them Duke of Bronte, 281; hangs Admiral Prince Caracciolo, 281; blockades Malta, 281; and captures the *Généreux*, 282-3; is much troubled by a wound received at the Nile, 284 and n.; and by his subordination to Lord Keith, 284; returning home through Germany, 284-5; he lands at Yarmouth, 1800, 285; and once more offers his services, 285; in the Baltic campaign of 1801, 286;

acts as second to Sir Hyde Parker, 286-7; and by conciliation, 287; advice, 288-90; and importunity, 291; secures the real command for himself, 292; utterly defeats the Danes at Copenhagen, 2 April, 1801, 294-9; and by skilful diplomacy obtains from them all that England requires, 300-1; created a Viscount, 302; purchases Merton and enjoys a spell ashore, 303; at the outbreak of the Napoleonic war receives command of the Mediterranean, 304; and for two years (1803-5) enforces the blockade of Toulon, 304-7; chases Villeneuve to the West Indies, 312-4; and back, 314-6; and in so doing lays bare the great invasion scheme of Napoleon, 317; pays his last visit to Merton, 317; and London, 317 and n.; is venerated by the Portsmouth mob, 318; and rapturously received by the fleet at Cadiz, 318; annihilates the Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar, 21 October, 1805, 321-43; but is mortally wounded, 334; and dies in the cockpit of the *Victory*, 337-42; but not until he receives assurance that the day is won, 342; his remains brought home, 347; and amid universal sorrow, 346-7; given a public funeral in St. Paul's, 348; a sound tactician, 265, 321; and a brilliant, 220-1, 265, 288, 292, 321-2, 325-6; toiling at his profession, 116 n., 213, 324; but by a dashing impetuosity, 238-9; leading men to believe that he defeats the enemy, 244; by "going at 'em," 326-7; a consummate strategist, 309; with inspiration, 312; born of study, 306; and practical experience, 312; an ideal leader, 348; bringing the best out of every man, 208; and instructing his captains, 262; while seeming to ask their advice, 262; winning all hearts, 206; by his bravery, 206, 209, 218, 247, 250, 251; and enthusiasm, 203, 204, 207, 213, 285, 304; his wit, 211, 254, 287, 298; and generosity, 302; his charm of manner, 215-6, 257, 258; and thoughtfulness for others, 211, 250-1, 273 n., 303, 306, 313, 319, 338; always ready to learn, 213, 306; and to accept responsibility, 206, 217, 238; tactful, 212, 287, 301; tenacious of purpose, 257-62, 312-5; intensely patriotic, 260; much in love with honour and glory, 206, 241; moved by piety, 253-4, 261, 324; self-sacrifice, 345; and a deep sense of duty, 211, 345; devoted to his men, 213, 305; and adored by them, 302; a martyr to ill-health, 202, 205, 207, 284, 305; especially sea-sickness, 254, 305; his daily life, 305-6; and famous sayings, 210, 211, 212, 213, 218, 223, 233, 253, 254, 261, 287, 290, 325, 337.

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¶Parker, Sir Hyde (1) (1714-82), succeeds Byron in the West Indies, 57; second in command at the battle of Martinique, 61; is sent home by Rodney, 66; and takes over the North Sea Fleet, 70 n.; fights a plucky battle off the Dogger Bank, 5 August, 1781, 71 n.; but refuses to serve again till Lord Sandwich retires, 71 n.; lost at sea in the *Cato*, 71 n.
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*¶Rodney, George Brydges, Lord (1719-92), born of an old family of landed proprietors, 34; and an aristocrat to his finger-tips, 35; enters the Navy as a "King's Letter Boy," 34 and n.; serves in the Austrian Succession War under Mathews and Vernon, 34; and with distinction under Hawke at Finisterre, 34; in Seven Years' War takes his part at Rochefort, 35; and must be regarded with Keppel and Howe as a disciple of Hawke, 1; in 1759 raised to flag-rank, 35; and destroys the flat-bottomed boats at Havre, 35; is appointed, 1761, to the Leeward Islands' station, 35; captures Martinique, 37-8; and is created a Baronet, 38; takes an expensive part in politics, 38; and is forced by financial embarrassments, 38; to exile himself in Paris, 39; at the outbreak of the American War, 39; is released by the kindness of a Frenchman, 39; and writing a *Memorandum* on the conduct of the campaign, 40; is appointed to succeed Byron in the West Indies, 42; on his way captures a provision fleet off Finisterre, 52-3; annihilates the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent, 16 January, 1780, 53-5; relieves Gibraltar, 56; and Minorca, 56; and is recognized as the foremost man in the service, 56; engages de Guichen in the battle of Martinique, 17 April, 1780, 57-8; and though his schemes, 58; are spoiled, 59; by the misguided zeal of subordinates, 59-62; yet by personal gallantry he wins the battle, 62-3; and saves Barbados, 64; drills his fleet with a heavy hand, 66; and sends home the inefficient, 66; upsets the calculations of Washington, 67; captures the Dutch island of St. Eustatius, 1781, 68-9; and is accused by the Whig party of peculation, 72-3; is surprised by the sudden appearance of a large French fleet, 70-1; and arrives too late to save Tobago, 72; invalided home, 72; but on the surrender of Cornwallis, 82; offers his services, 82; and returning to the Indies, 94; engages de Grasse at the battle of the Saints, 12 April, 1782, 97-101; and by an overwhelming victory, 101-11; saves the British Empire, 111; and re-establishes the prestige of the fleet, 112; recalled by the Whig party, 113; but greeted effusively on his return, 114; and raised to the peerage, 115; though handicapped by the infirmities of age, 39, 52; and other worries, 72-3, 117; a grand fighter, 62-3; with the dash of Hawke, 51, 54; and the science of Albemarle, 58; as a disciplinarian remorselessly stern, 66, 118; but hospitable and

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*¶Sandwich, John Montagu, fourth Earl of (1718-92), First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-82, 7; an able but corrupt administrator, 7; who by neglect of the Navy, 7; lays England open to repeated disasters in the American War, 10-15, 24-30, 45-51, 132-3; his want of preparation, 7; leaves the Mediterranean defenceless, 51, 132; and gravely handicaps Keppel, 9; Barrington, 42; Rodney, 52, 70; Howe, 123-4; Hyde Parker, 70 n.; Sir Charles Hardy, 25; and Kempenfelt, 90; shields the administration by an attempt to lay the blame on Keppel, 17; but by his conduct drives all the best men from the service, 23, 51, 70 n., 125; gives the command of the Channel to Sir Charles Hardy, 24; whose defensive tactics almost wreck the Ministry, 30; his sins covered in his own day and ever since by Rodney's victories, 51-6, 57-65, 68-70, 94-113; his rule best symbolized by the loss of the *Royal George*, 132-4.
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